



Pope Francis comments to pilgrims at the Aparecida Basilica after celebrating Mass in Aparecida, Brazil, Wednesday, July 24, 2013. (AP Photo/D. Stinellis)

POPE: RESIST FALSE IDOLS

JENNY BARCHFIELD
NICOLE WINFIELD
Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — Pope Francis made an emotional plea Wednesday for Roman Catholics to shun materialism in the first public Mass of his initial international trip as pontiff, then returned to Rio de Janeiro for a meeting with drug addicts heavy in symbolism.

The session was to meant to drive home the message that the humble pope has repeatedly delivered during his short papacy: that the Catholic Church must focus on the poor, those who are suffering and the outcasts of society.

During his stop at a Rio hospital, Francis was expected to stick with the theme of faith and sacrifice that he spoke about earlier Wednesday in his homily in Aparecida, a small town halfway between Rio and Sao Paulo. The pontiff urged Catholics to resist the "ephemeral idols" of money, power and pleasure.

It was an emotional trip to one of the most important shrines in Latin America.

Continued on page 2



Emergency personnel respond to the scene of a train derailment in Santiago de Compostela, Spain, on Wednesday, July 24, 2013. The train derailed in northwestern Spain on Wednesday night, toppling passenger cars on their sides and leaving at least one torn open as smoke rose into the air. At least 45 were pronounced dead at the scene, with hundreds more injured.

(AP Photo/Antonio Hernandez)

Spain passenger train derails, killing at least 45

MADRID (AP) — A passenger train derailed in northwestern Spain on Wednesday night, killing at least 45 people and leaving hundreds injured, officials said. Alberto Nunez Feijoo, president of the region of Galicia, said at least 35 people aboard the train were killed.

State-owned train operator Renfe said in a statement that 218 passengers and

an unspecified number of staff were on board at the time of the accident. Renfe did not give an estimate of the numbers of dead or injured.

Feast day festivities planned in the city of Santiago de Compostela were cancelled, town hall spokeswoman Maria Pardo told Spanish National television TVE.

A photographer at the

scene said he saw dozens of what appeared to be dead bodies being extracted from the wreck by emergency workers. TVE showed footage of what appeared to be several bodies covered by blankets alongside the tracks next to the damaged train wagons.

The photographer, Xabier Martinez, told The Associated Press that he also spoke

to two injured train passengers who said they felt a strong vibration before the derailling.

The accident occurred along a high-speed stretch of track near the train station in Santiago de Compostela, 95 kilometers (60 miles) south of El Ferrol. Rescue workers were seen in the television images caring for people still inside some of the wagons. □

Pope: Resist 'idols' of money, power, pleasure

Continued from Front

Thousands packed into the huge Basilica of the Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida in an agricultural region of verdant fields. Tens of thousands more braved a cold rain outside to catch a glimpse of the first pope from the Americas returning to a shrine of great meaning to the continent and to him personally. Before the Mass, Francis stood in silent prayer in front of the 15-inch statue of the Virgin of Aparecida, the "Black Mary," his eyes tearing up as he breathed heavily. He later carried it in his arms.

their values of faith, generosity and fraternity, a message he was expected to repeat later in the day during a visit to the drug rehabilitation center in Rio de Janeiro.

"It is true that nowadays, to some extent, everyone, including our young people, feels attracted by the many idols which take the place of God and appear to offer hope: money, success, power, pleasure," he said. "Often a growing sense of loneliness and emptiness in the hearts of many people leads them to seek satisfaction in these ephemeral idols."

The church is struggling in Latin America to keep

cal 2007 meeting of Latin American bishops who, under the guidance of then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, drafted a mission statement on how to reinvigorate the faith on the continent.

"I've seen people in my own congregation leave because the Evangelicals offer them something new and exciting, and the Catholic Church was seen as kind of old and stuffy," said Marcia Cecilia de Souza, owner of a private school in the southern state of Santa Catarina, as she searched for newspaper to stuff into her soaked leather boots. "Francis is such an inspiration, so



Members of the clergy listen to Pope Francis, center right, as he gives Mass inside Aparecida Basilica in Aparecida, Brazil, Wednesday, July 24, 2013. Francis celebrated the first public Mass of his trip to Brazil after praying before the statue of Our Lady of Aparecida, Brazil's patron saint. (AP Photo/Felipe Dana)

It was a deeply personal moment for this pontiff, who has entrusted his papacy to the Virgin Mary and, like many Catholics in Latin America, places great importance in devotion to Mary.

After his Mass, the pope blessed the tens of thousands gathered outside the basilica and announced that he would return to Aparecida in 2017, the year that marks the 300th anniversary of a fisherman finding the Black Mary statue in a nearby river.

During his homily, Francis urged Catholics to keep

Catholics from straying to evangelical and Pentecostal churches that often promise help in finding material wealth, an alluring attraction in a poverty-racked continent. Francis' top priority as pope has been to reach out to the world's poor and inspire Catholic leaders to go to slums and other peripheries to preach.

It was no coincidence, then, that the first major event of his first foreign trip as pope was a Mass in Aparecida. The shrine, which draws 11 million pilgrims a year, hosted a criti-

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AROUND THE WORLD

30 rescued from Dutch ship accident off Ireland

DUBLIN (AP) — Irish emergency officials say all 30 people aboard a Dutch sailing ship have been rescued after it crashed into rocks off the County Cork coast. The Royal National Lifeboat Institution says the twin-masted Astrid was using engine power to enter the port of Kinsale when its motor failed and the ship drifted quickly on to rocks. It broke apart and sank hours after Wednesday's evacuation. The Astrid, a 42-meter (138-foot) training ship for sailors, was destined for a classic vessels regatta Friday in the West Cork harbor village of Glandore. The RNLi says four lifeboats and two helicopters were scrambled. Those rescued were treated for shock and mild hypothermia. □

Interpol posts alert for al-Qaida escapees in Iraq

PARIS (AP) — International police agency Interpol has issued a security alert around the Middle East over the escape of al-Qaida members and other dangerous convicts from two Iraqi prisons. The agency says it is working with Iraqi police to collect photos and fingerprints of the escaped prisoners to help police worldwide hunt them down. Interpol said in a statement Wednesday that the jailbreaks from the infamous Abu Ghraib prison and the Taji prison near Baghdad on Sunday pose "a major threat to global security." Last year, al-Qaida's Iraq arm launched a campaign called "Breaking the Walls" that made freeing its imprisoned members a top priority. □

Greece woos tourists with long shopping hours

ATHENS, Greece (AP) — Greece's parliament has approved legislation to extend Sunday opening hours for stores, in an effort to boost spending by tourists and stimulate the crisis-hit economy. Lawmakers voted Wednesday in favor of legislation allowing department stores to open on seven Sundays during the year and smaller, independent shops the right to open every Sunday. Earlier rules kept most stores closed. Small business associations, left-wing opposition parties, and senior members of the Greek Orthodox Church strongly oppose the new measures. Store owners and the Greek Communist party staged demonstrations in central Athens late Tuesday. □

Netanyahu wants West Bank included in talks

JERUSALEM (AP) — An Israeli official says Benjamin Netanyahu wants the fate of the West Bank included in a referendum on any land-for-peace deal with the Palestinians. Current law only requires a referendum if Israel gives up east Jerusalem or the Golan Heights, war-won lands it annexed. It's unclear if adding the West Bank would make it harder for a deal to get approved or if Netanyahu wants a wider political cover for negotiations. Hard-liners are pushing for an amended referendum as peace talks appear possible for the first time in five years. An official in Netanyahu's office said Wednesday that the prime minister asked for an amended referendum bill to include the West Bank. □

Forbes apologizes for calling Irish president gay

DUBLIN (AP) — Financial news publisher Forbes says it's apologizing to Ireland's president for inaccurately describing him as gay in an online article. The New York-based media company pulled the offending piece from its website Wednesday and replaced it with an apology to readers and, indirectly, to President Michael D. Higgins. "Forbes will be issuing an apology to President Higgins in a separate correspondence," the publisher said. □

Caroline Kennedy picked to be next US Japan ambassador

MARK LANDLER

© 2013 New York Times
WASHINGTON - President Barack Obama on Wednesday nominated Caroline Kennedy to be ambassador to Japan, moving to give a scion of America's most enduring political dynasty a diplomatic post that has often gone to political heavyweights. In naming Kennedy, whose appointment had been rumored for months, Obama is keeping with a long tradition of rewarding important campaign supporters with plum embassies. He recently nominated major fundraisers to be envoys in London and Berlin. But Kennedy's value to Obama has been less about money than mystique. As the daughter of President John F. Kennedy, her imprimatur on his candidacy in 2008 - along with that of her uncle Sen. Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts - elevated him at a key moment against his better-known rival, Hillary Rodham Clinton. And it gave Kennedy lasting ties to Obama, something analysts said would be useful in Japan, where public officials and journalists have been buzzing with speculation about a Kennedy in Tokyo. Kennedy, 55, a lawyer, author and director of numerous nonprofit organizations, has never worked in government and has no special expertise in Japan. But some experts said her lack of knowledge was outweighed by her connections to the Oval Office. She shares that with other marquee figures who have been ambassadors to Tokyo, including former Vice President Walter F. Mondale; Howard Baker, a former senator and White House chief of staff; and Thomas S. Foley, a former speaker of the House. "For those who say she doesn't know a lot about Japan, I say 'sure,' but neither did Walter Mondale," said Kurt M. Campbell, a Japan expert who was assistant secretary of state for East Asian affairs.

Obama restates economic vision at site that resonates

MICHAEL D. SHEAR

PETER BAKER

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GALESBURG, Ill. - President Barack Obama tried to move past months of debate over guns, surveillance and scandal Wednesday and reorient his administration behind a program to lift a middling economy and help middle-class Americans who are stuck with stagnant incomes and shrinking horizons. Returning to the site of his first major economic speech as a young senator eight years ago, Obama lamented that typical Americans had been left behind by globalization, Wall Street irresponsibility and Washington policies, while the richest Americans had accumulated more wealth. He declared it "my highest priority" to reverse those trends, while accusing other politicians of not only ignoring the problem but also making it worse. "With this endless parade of distractions and political posturing and phony scandals, Washington's taken its eye off the ball," Obama told an audience at Knox College. "And I am here to say this needs to stop. This needs to stop. This moment does not require short-term thinking, and it does not require having the same old stale debates. Our focus must be on the basic eco-

nomics issues that matter most to you - the people we represent."

The president mainly offered revived elements of his largely stalled economic program, like developing new energy, rebuilding

made since the recession of 2008-09 and to position himself as the champion of a disaffected middle class that has yet to recover fully. He chastised Republicans in Congress for not focusing on economic priorities and

better shot," he said, addressing himself to Republican leaders. "Now it's time for you to lay out yours." Republican leaders were not impressed. Speaker John A. Boehner said before the speech that it



President Barack Obama speaks in Galesburg, Ill., July 24, 2013. Obama is scheduled to make a series of speeches about the economy beginning Wednesday at Knox College in Galesburg and later at the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg.

(Stephen Crowley/The New York Times)

manufacturing, spending more on roads, bridges and ports, expanding preschool to every 4-year-old and raising the minimum wage.

But he and his aides hoped to use the speech both to claim credit for the progress

obstructing his initiatives.

"Over the last six months, this gridlock has gotten worse," he said.

And he challenged them to come up with their own plans.

"I am laying out my ideas to give the middle class a

would not make a difference.

"What's it going to accomplish?" he asked on the floor in Washington. "You've probably got the answer: nothing. It's a hollow shell. It's an Easter egg with no candy in it." □

Pentagon delaying fighter jet delivery to Egypt

ROBERT BURNS

AP National Security Writer
WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. is delaying delivery of four F-16 fighter jets to Egypt in light of the military overthrow of Mohammed Morsi as president, but it has not decided whether to suspend military aid more broadly, the Pentagon said Wednesday. Pentagon press secretary George Little said President Barack Obama made the decision to hold up the F-16 delivery while the administration continues to review options and consult with Congress on military assistance generally.

The four F-16s were to be delivered under a previous-

ly arranged sale of 20. Eight of the F-16s were delivered earlier this year; after the four originally set for delivery this week the final eight were to be sent later this year. Also on order by the Egyptian military are U.S.-made M1A1 Abrams tanks; the administration has not yet decided whether to go ahead with those.

The F-16 delay was the first direct action the U.S. has taken since the Egyptian military ousted Morsi and installed a new civilian government. Under U.S. law, military aid to a country that underwent a coup d'etat must be suspended. But the Obama administration says it is still trying to de-

termine if what happened three weeks ago in Egypt was in fact a coup. Egypt is a key ally in the Middle East and the administration is reluctant to cut off the \$1.3 billion aid package it sends to Cairo every year.

Little said Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel called Egypt's military chief, Gen. Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, on Wednesday to discuss the administration's decision.

"We remain committed to the U.S.-Egypt defense relationship as it remains a foundation of our broader strategic partnership with Egypt and serves as pillar for regional stability," Little said. "Moving forward, everything that we do and

say will continue to be focused on hastening Egypt's return to a democratically elected government as soon as possible," he added.

Little said the Pentagon has decided to proceed as planned with a joint U.S.-Egyptian military exercise called Bright Star, which has been a centerpiece of the two countries' military relations for decades. Bright Star usually is held every other year, but the 2011 maneuvers were canceled following the revolution that ousted President Hosni Mubarak in January. This year's exercise is tentatively planned to begin in mid-September. □

House votes to continue NSA surveillance program

DONNA CASSATA

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. House of Representatives has voted to continue the collection of hundreds of millions of Americans' phone records in the fight against terrorism.

The chamber rejected a measure to end the program's authority, but it was unlikely to settle the debate over privacy rights and government efforts to thwart terrorism. The vote was 217-205 on Wednesday.

A vote marked the first chance for lawmakers to take a stand on the secret surveillance program since former NSA systems analyst Edward Snowden leaked classified documents last month that spelled out the monumental scope of the government's activities. Republican Rep. Justin Amash had challenged the program as an indiscriminate collection of phone records, saying his effort was to defend the U.S. Constitution and "defend the privacy of every American."

The issue created unusual



Rep. Justin Amash, R-Mich. returns to his office on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, July 24, 2013, after a meeting with constituents. The U.S. House of Representatives has voted to continue the collection of hundreds of millions of Americans' phone records in the fight against terrorism, despite the efforts of Amash and others to challenge the program.

(AP Photo/J. Scott Applewhite)

political coalitions in Washington, with the Obama administration, national security leaders in Congress and the Republican establishment facing off against libertarian-leaning conservatives and some liberal Democrats.

The measure faces strong opposition in the Senate and from the White House and is unlikely to survive in a final spending bill. Amash's

measure was offered as an addition to a \$598.3 billion defense spending bill for 2014.

"Have 12 years gone by and our memories faded so badly that we forgot what happened on Sept. 11?" Rep. Mike Rogers, the Republican chairman of the Intelligence committee, said in pleading with his colleagues to back the program.

With a flurry of letters, statements and tweets, both sides lobbied furiously in the hours prior to the vote in the Republican-controlled House. The director of national intelligence, James Clapper, warned against dismantling a critical intelligence tool.

Since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, Congress has authorized — and a Republican and a Democratic president have signed — an extension of the powers to search records and conduct roving wiretaps in pursuit of terrorists.

Since the disclosures this year, however, lawmakers have said they were shocked by the scope of the two programs — one to collect records of hundreds of millions of calls and the other allowing the NSA to sweep up Internet usage data from around the world that goes through nine major U.S.-based providers.

"We've really gone overboard on the security side,"

said Rep. Peter Welch, who said it was time for a full debate on behalf of U.S. taxpayers about programs long cloaked in secrecy and part of an annual classified intelligence budget of about \$30 billion.

The White House and the director of the NSA, Army Gen. Keith Alexander, made last-minute appeals to lawmakers, urging them to oppose the amendment. Eight former attorneys general, CIA directors and national security experts wrote in a letter to lawmakers that the two programs are fully authorized by law and "conducted in a manner that appropriately respects the privacy and civil liberties interests of Americans."

White House press secretary Jay Carney issued an unusual statement on the eve of Wednesday's vote, arguing that the change would "hastily dismantle one of our intelligence community's counterterrorism tools." □

White House seeking clarity on leaker Snowden's status

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Obama administration said Wednesday it has asked Russian authorities to clarify the status of National Security Agency leaker Edward Snowden and restated its desire to see him returned to the United States.

A state news agency in Russia said Snowden has been given a document allowing him to leave the transit zone of a Moscow airport. But Snowden's lawyer later said his client's asylum status has not been resolved and that Snowden will stay at the airport for now.

State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said Secretary of State John Kerry called Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to reiterate "the belief of the United States, that Mr. Snowden needs to be returned to the United States, where he will have a fair trial; that Russia still has the ability to do the right thing."

She said Kerry told Lavrov that the U.S. would be

"deeply disappointed" if Russia made any effort to facilitate his movement out of the airport, or to any destination other than the U.S. "Obviously any move that would allow Mr. Snowden to depart the airport would be deeply disappointing," Psaki said.

Snowden has been marooned in the Moscow airport since June 23 on a flight from Hong Kong. Snowden has applied for asylum in Russia after agreeing to a demand by Russian President Vladimir Putin that he stop leaking information as a condition of remaining in the country. White House spokesman Jay Carney said the administration has made clear to the Russians its desire to see Snowden returned to the U.S. to face espionage charges. Carney had no updates on how Snowden's status might affect President Barack Obama's plans to travel to Russia in September. □

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George H.W. Bush shaves head to encourage child



President George H. W. Bush, front center, with his Secret Service security detail including Jon, fifth from left, holding his son Patrick (last name withheld at family's request), 2, in Kennebunkport, Maine. Bush this week joined members of his Secret Service detail in shaving his head to show his support for the two-year-old who is being treated for leukemia and started losing his hair.

(AP Photo/Office of George Bush)

day says the 89-year-old former president acted earlier this week at his summer home in Kennebunkport, Maine. That was after he saw members of his Secret Service detail with newly shaved heads to show support for the 2-year-old son of an agent. The child is undergoing treatment for leukemia and is losing his hair as a result.

The Bush spokesman identified the boy only as Patrick. George and Barbara Bush lost their second child, 4-year-old Robin Bush, to leukemia almost 60 years ago.

The security detail has launched a website, www.patrickspals.org, to help with expenses associated with Patrick's treatment. □

HOUSTON (AP) — Former President George H.W. Bush has shaved his head to show solidarity for the sick child of a Secret Service agent. A statement issued by a Bush spokesman Wednesday

Two hikers rescued but drive to ocean deaths

ROQUE BLUFFS, Maine (AP) — A pregnant woman and her friend got lost hiking in Maine and were rescued but died later that evening, authorities said, when they accidentally drove their car into the ocean in the nighttime fog.

Amy Stiner, 37, and Melissa Moyer, 38, presumably drowned when Stiner drove her minivan down a boat ramp at the end of a dead-end road at about Tuesday night in Roque Bluffs, a town of 300 people in eastern Maine, said Washington County Sheriff Donnie Smith.

He called the deaths a tragic accident made worse because Stiner was five months pregnant.

"They called on the phone that they were in the water and the car was filling up. Then the phone went dead," Smith said.

"An hour later, the deputies found the car." Earlier in the evening, the women hiked in Roque Bluffs State Park but got lost and called for help.

A landowner found them and their dog and gave them rides back to his house, where a warden picked them up and brought them to their vehicle, which was parked at the park.

But Stiner then drove toward the boat ramp instead of in the other direction toward her home, Smith said. □



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NYC ferries told to honk overnight

PATRICK MCGEEHAN

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NEW YORK - Three years ago, residents of Battery Park City in Lower Manhattan complained about the noisy engines of ferryboats. Now, the ferries' horns have some of them squawking again and blaming letter-of-the-law kayakers for their lost sleep. The rules of navigation enforced by the Coast Guard require ferries and other powerboats to blast their horns for several seconds before departing docks. But some people who live in apartments in Battery Park City say the ferries were not routinely following that rule - until some kayakers complained to the U.S. Coast Guard. Now, these residents say, the ferries are sounding off from 6 a.m. until late at night, disrupting the relative peace of their oasis built on landfill. One resident,

Wolfgang Gabler, has posted a video of his wife and children appearing to be roused from slumber by blasts of a ferry's horn.

He even created a Facebook page, "Stop Honking Ferries in New York City."

Early this month, Gabler wrote an open letter to his neighbors about the honking on a website devoted to happenings in Lower Manhattan. The website's editor, Steven Greer, reported that the instigator of the cacophony was Nancy Brous, a Manhattan resident who heads the New York City Water Trail Association. He even posted a picture of Brous paddling a kayak.

Brous was none too happy about being portrayed as a whistle-blower who caused so many horns to be blown. She acknowl-

edged that the growing popularity of kayaking in the Hudson and East Rivers has increased the potential for conflict between paddlers and powerboats. But, she insisted in an interview last week, "This isn't a battle between kayakers and ferries."

She admitted that she had been trying for two years to persuade the Coast Guard to enforce the rule. At the urging of a Coast Guard official, she said, she encouraged other

ren on a fire engine."

Charles Rowe, a spokesman for the Coast Guard, said that the Coast Guard investigated the kayakers' complaints and found that they "merited action." The Coast Guard reminded the ferry operators "that they had to sound their horns as required," Rowe said. "It doesn't matter if it's the Staten Island Ferry or any of these other ones."

For its part, Billybey Ferry said through a spokesman, "We are aware that the



Kayakers on the Hudson River as a ferryboat passes by in New York. Some kayakers complained that the boats had not been sounding their horns to warn that they were leaving their docks, while some residents complain about the horns' noise.

(Joshua Bright/The New York Times)

paddlers to make note of the ferries' failure to comply. She compiled those notes - and even a video one kayaker shot aboard an East River ferry that did not honk - and forwarded them to the Coast Guard, she said. Happily, Brous said, "I have heard that ferries all over have been blasting more now." She said that she did not understand why anybody would want to vilify kayakers for seeking to have much bigger boats follow a rule that was written for the safety of everybody on the water.

Asking that ferries not blow their horns for fear of waking someone, she said, "is like saying, 'Don't run a si-

sounding of our horns may cause a disturbance to residents in the neighborhoods near where our ferries land, including Battery Park City."

The spokesman, Damiano DeMonte, added, "We hope that our neighbors can appreciate our need to operate in strict compliance with U.S. Coast Guard rules governing the safe operation of our shared waterways."

Eric Stiller, whose company, Manhattan Kayak, operates kayak and paddleboard tours from Pier 66 on the Hudson, said he hoped that ferries would signal their departures more regularly. □

Q&A ON THE NEWS

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Q: Why was Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Fla., and not in Miami Gardens in the middle of the school year? Sanford is approximately 250 miles from Miami Gardens. How did he plan to get back to school on Monday, Feb. 27?

-- **Trish Ranck, Atlanta**

A: Martin, who was a junior at Dr. Michael M. Krop Senior High School in Miami, was serving a 10-day suspension from school when he was shot on Sunday, Feb. 26, 2012. He had been caught with an "empty plastic bag with traces of marijuana in it," according to a police report obtained by the Miami Herald. Martin was visiting with his father at his father's girlfriend's condominium in Sanford. It was Martin's third suspension, the paper reported. The others were for defacing school lockers with graffiti and for tardiness and truancy.

Q: I've seen a lot of U.S. soldiers wearing berets, but I thought the Army no longer required soldiers to wear them. What happened? Did the army change its mind?

Willis Reasons, Roswell, Ga.

A: Two years ago, the patrol cap replaced the black beret as the headgear of soldiers wearing U.S. Army Combat Uniforms (camouflage fatigues known as ACUs). Black berets remain the official headgear of the Army Service Uniform (ASU), a dress uniform. Also, Special Forces still wear green berets; Airborne troops wear maroon berets; and Rangers wear tan berets.

Q: I was in South Korea in 1952-53 and remember that Kaesong was in South Korea. Now it appears to be in North Korea. Did it change hands?

-- Bob Johnson, Atlanta

A: The city of Kaesong was in South Korea after World War II, but was declared a part of North Korea by the Korean Armistice Agreement, which was signed on July 27, 1953, to end the Korean War. Kaesong is the southernmost city in North Korea, but is home to 123 South Korean factories as a "rare symbol of inter-Korean co-operation," the BBC reported.

Those South Korean factories employ 53,000 North Korean workers in what is described as a joint industrial zone. The factories were shut down in April as diplomatic relations soured between the countries.

Q: Twice in the last week, I received no mail. Two days in a row. The post office has not already cut back from six-day delivery, has it? I get enough junk mail that it's possible for this to happen, but it's not likely four days in the past week.

-- **Joe Cannon, College Park, Ga.**

A: Congress' budget, passed in the spring, blocked the U.S. Postal Service's plan to end Saturday mail delivery. The proposed five-day delivery was scheduled to begin next month, but wording in the new budget barred five-day mail service. The USPS was hoping to save \$2 billion a year by ending Saturday mail delivery after it lost \$15.9 billion in 2012. The USPS still would have delivered packages on Saturday, under the plan. □

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US home mail delivery could just disappear

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans for generations have come to depend on door-to-door mail delivery. But with the U.S. Postal Service facing billions of dollars in annual losses, that service could be virtually finished by 2022 under a proposal being considered in Congress.

Curbside delivery, which includes deliveries to mailboxes at the end of driveways, and cluster box delivery would replace letter carriers walking right up to homes' front doors — a scene deeply embedded in movies and other popular culture.

A panel in the House of Representatives was considering the proposal Wednesday. It's part of broader legislation designed to cut costs at the agency by up to \$4.5 billion a year. The Postal Service had a \$16 billion loss last year.

The agency, long ago one of the government's most powerful for the many jobs it had at its disposal across the country, has suffered from competition by private delivery companies.

The agency has been pursuing a major restructuring. Since 2006, it has reduced annual costs by about \$15 billion, cut its workforce by 193,000, or 28 percent, and consolidated more than 200 mail-processing locations.

Mail delivery can be a sensitive subject among some Americans. The service earlier this year backed off its plan to end Saturday mail delivery, something that it has tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully over the past several years to persuade Congress to approve. □

US Financial Front: New-home sales jump to highest level in 5 years

C. S. RUGABER
AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans snapped up new homes in June at the

Commerce Department said Wednesday. That's the highest since May 2008 and up from an annual rate of 459,000 in May,

gain since January 1992. "There's an awful lot of headroom for more gains in new-home sales once the job market recovers more fully," Jonathan Basile, an economist at Credit Suisse, said in a note to clients.

Home sales and prices have climbed since early last year, buoyed by solid hiring and low mortgage rates. Housing has helped drive economic growth this year at a time when other parts of the economy have languished, such as manufacturing and business investment.

New-home sales make up only a small part of the market. But they have an outsize impact on the economy. Each home built creates an average of three new jobs and generates about \$90,000 in tax revenue, according to data from the National Association of Home Builders. One concern is that rising mortgage rates could slow sales in the coming months. The average rate on the 30-year fixed was

4.37 percent last week — a full percentage point higher than in early May. At the same time, mortgage applications to purchase homes have fallen in the past few weeks.

Rates surged after Chairman Ben Bernanke said the Federal Reserve could slow its bond-buying program later this year if the economy continues to improve. The Fed's bond purchases have kept long-term interest rates low, encouraging more borrowing and spending.

Economists noted that new-home sales reflect contract signings, rather than completed purchases, and don't necessarily include completed mortgage applications. As a result, last month's increase could reflect efforts by some purchasers to buy homes before rates rise further.

"The U.S. housing market appears to be shrugging off the recent jump in mortgage rates," said Sal Guatieri, an economist at BMO Capital Markets. □



In this photo, a zero net energy home is listed for sale in New Paltz, N.Y. Sales of newly built homes rose 8.3% last month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 497,000, the Commerce Department reported Wednesday, July 24, 2013. That's the highest since May 2008. (AP Photo/Mike Groll)

fastest pace in five years, a sign the housing recovery is strengthening.

Sales of newly built homes rose 8.3 percent last month to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 497,000, the

which was revised lower. While sales are still below the 700,000 pace consistent with healthy markets, they have risen 38 percent in the past 12 months. That's the biggest annual

US needs \$95.51 per share to break even on GM

TOM KRISHER
Associated Press
DETROIT (AP) — General

Motors stock would have to sell for \$95.51 per share for taxpayers to break even on bailing out the company, according to a government watchdog's report released Wednesday. That price is about three times what GM shares are selling for now, even after a 25 percent increase in the price so far this year.

"There's no question that Treasury, the taxpayers, are going to lose money on the GM investment," Special Inspector General

Christy Romero, author of the July quarterly report to Congress, said in an interview.

GM needed the \$49.5 billion bailout to survive its trip through bankruptcy restructuring in 2009. Since emerging from bankruptcy, the restructured company has piled up \$17.2 billion in profits. In exchange for the bailout, the government got 61 percent of GM's stock. It cut that to 33 percent in GM's November 2010 initial public offering. The government has gradually been selling off the rest of the stock, with the

goal of exiting the investment by April of next year. As of June 6, it still owned 189 million shares, or about 14 percent of the company, according to the report.

Taxpayers are still \$18.1 billion in the hole on the \$49.5 billion bailout, including interest and dividends, according to the report. If the government sells its remaining shares of GM for the current stock price of \$36.61, it would get just over \$6.9 billion, meaning taxpayers would lose about \$11.2 billion on the bailout.

When GM was bailed out in 2008 and 2009, the government said it was necessary to stop the industrial Midwest economy from collapsing. Chrysler was bailed out for \$12.5 billion at the same time. Taxpayers wound up losing \$2.9 billion on that bailout, Romero's report said.

The report says that taxpayers still are owed \$14.6 billion for bailing out Ally Financial Inc., which once was GM's auto lending arm. Treasury still owns 74 percent of the company, plus \$5.9 billion worth of preferred stock. □



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Egypt army chief el-Sissi signals possible crackdown

HAMZA HENDAWI
Associated Press
CAIRO (AP) — The military chief who ousted Egypt's elected president called

on the public Wednesday to take to the streets to give him and the police a mandate to tackle "violence and terrorism," in an

address that pointed to a possible move against supporters of the Islamist leader.

The call by Gen. Abdel-

Fattah el-Sissi, made in a speech to a graduation ceremony for military cadets, underlined how the military chief is the source of real power in Egypt despite the creation of a civilian government after the July 3 coup that removed Mohammed Morsi.

His comments appeared designed to secure a public cover for what could be a move to dismantle sit-in camps by Morsi's supporters in Cairo and elsewhere, as well as a campaign against Islamic radicals that have stepped up attacks on security forces in Sinai. El-Sissi called for a mass turnout in Friday rallies to give him a "mandate" to do what is "necessary" to stop bloodshed.

A coalition of Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood and allied factions denounced his speech, calling it an "open invitation" to civil war. Their coalition plans protests and marches of its own on Friday, raising the potential for violence between the two camps.

El-Sissi removed Morsi after four days of protests by millions of Egyptians demanding his ouster after a year in office, and the military says its goal is to set the country on a path to democracy. But the move has set top ally Washington in an uncomfortable position: The U.S. has implicitly accepted Morsi's removal, even while the Obama administration reviews whether it constitutes a military coup, which under U.S. law would require a shut-off of \$1.3 billion in annual aid to Egypt's army.

On Wednesday, Washington announced it is delaying delivery of four F-16 fighter jets to Egypt as it conducts the review — its first direct action in response to the ouster. Still, officials cautioned they had not yet decided whether to suspend military aid more broadly.

Since Morsi's fall, his Islamist supporters have taken to the streets vowing to continue protests until he is reinstated. Clashes have erupted multiple times between the Islamists and Morsi opponents or security forces in Cairo and other cities. Around 150 people have been killed, a majority from the pro-Morsi side, including more than 50 killed by troops during clashes outside a military facility in eastern Cairo.

Each side accuses the other of starting the violence. Throughout, the military and its allied media have depicted the protesters as a dangerous armed movement. The Muslim Brotherhood and its allies say their protests are peaceful. The group accuses troops or thugs hired by the Interior Ministry, which is in charge of the police, of attacking pro-Morsi rallies. □



Egyptian Defense Minister Gen. Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi reviews honor guards at the Ministry of Defense in Cairo. El-Sissi has asked Egyptians to hold mass rallies to show they are behind him when he undertakes measures to fight violence and "terrorism."

(AP Photo/Jim Watson, Pool)

Hezbollah chief: EU yielded to US, Israeli will

ZEINA KARAM
Associated Press
BEIRUT (AP) — The leader of Lebanon's Hezbollah on Wednesday ridiculed a European Union decision to place the group's military wing on a terror list, accusing the body of capitulating to U.S. and Israeli pressures by blacklisting it. Sheik Hassan Nasrallah said the decision is "worthless" and makes EU countries partners in any future Israeli aggression against Lebanon or his militant group. The EU's 28 foreign ministers made the announcement Monday after prolonged diplomatic pressure from

the U.S. and Israel, both which consider Hezbollah a terrorist organization.

"I did not feel for one moment that this was a sovereign European decision, but rather one that was dictated to them," Nasrallah said, speaking to supporters in Beirut via satellite link. "Europe was not convinced, but has capitulated ... to American and Israeli wishes."

Nasrallah has been in hiding since the 2006 month-long war between Hezbollah and Israel. He has since made very few, and only brief, public appearances. Some European countries

had pushed for the EU action by citing a terrorist attack in Bulgaria's Black Sea resort of Burgas last year that killed five Israeli tourists and a Bulgarian. Hezbollah's military wing was accused of involvement, an allegation it denied. In March, a criminal court in Cyprus found a Hezbollah member guilty of helping to plan attacks on Israelis on the Mediterranean island. Both Bulgaria and Cyprus are EU members. Several EU nations have pointed to Hezbollah's involvement in Syria as further reason for the move.

"These (European) coun-

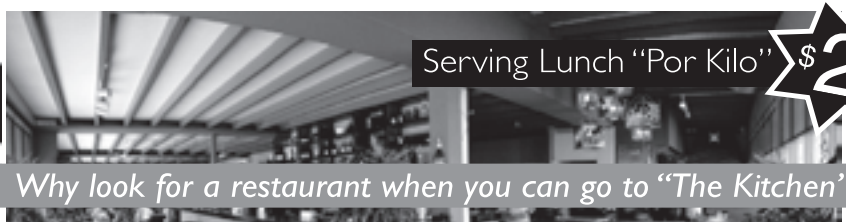
tries are giving Israel a cover to launch an aggression against Lebanon," Nasrallah said, adding that makes them full partners in any future Israeli attacks in Lebanon.

The blacklisting entails asset freezes and paves the way for possible travel bans on members of Hezbollah's military wing. The EU ministers hope it will also curtail fundraising.

Nasrallah derided the move, saying members of the group "did not take summer vacations in Sardinia." He also denied that Hezbollah has money in European banks. □

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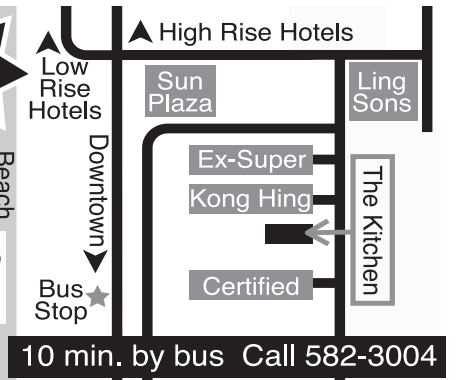


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United Nations chemical weapons experts in Syria

ALBERT AJI
ZEINA KARAM
Associated Press

DAMASCUS, Syria (AP) — A senior United Nations team tasked with investigating the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria's civil war began a mission to Damascus Wednesday, trying to hammer out with Syrian officials the terms for their investigation.

It is the first such trip by international experts, and the talks were expected to be thorny — focusing on about a dozen incidents in which chemical arms were allegedly used. The rebels, the U.S. and others have accused the government of using the weapons of mass destruction, while Damascus and its ally Russia have blamed the rebels. The delegation's arrival coincided with intense fighting in neighborhoods on the edge of the capital.

Activists and residents reported heavy clashes in the Jobar district, parts of which are held by rebels trying to topple President Bashar Assad. Several mortar shells fired from Jobar crashed into residential neighborhoods in Damascus. "I was in the bedroom and my parents were in the sitting room when a mortar shell crashed into our apartment," said Jawad Nathem, 22. "Everything turned into dust and glass and shrapnel flew everywhere."

No one was hurt. "God saved us," Nathem said later from the damaged apartment on the 9th floor. The U.N. team was invited by the Syrian government to discuss the terms of a possible inquiry into the alleged chemical weapons attacks.

Damascus has agreed that

the U.N. investigate only one of the reported chemical weapons attacks — a March 19 incident in the northern village of Khan al-Assal in which rebels and the government accuse each other of using chemical weapons — but rejected inquiries into other alleged attack sites in the central city of Homs, Damascus and elsewhere.

The U.S. and U.N. have called on Assad's regime to grant the United Nations team unfettered access to investigate all allegations of chemical weapon use. Swedish chemical weapons expert Ake Sellstrom and U.N. disarmament chief Angela Kane arrived from neighboring Lebanon for a two-day visit, during which they are set to meet with senior Syrian officials, the U.N. said in a brief statement issued in the Syrian capital.

The Assad regime is said to have one of the world's largest stockpiles of chemical weapons, including the mustard gas and the nerve agent sarin.

There are concerns that Assad might use them on a large scale, transfer some of them to the Lebanese militant Hezbollah group or that the chemical agents could fall into the hands of al-Qaida militants and other extremists among the rebels.

Khan al-Assal, on the southwestern edge of the embattled city of Aleppo, was under government control in March but was captured by the rebels earlier this week. Even if the U.N. team is granted access to Khan al-Assal by both sides, it may be difficult to find evidence from the attack because so much time has passed. □



French President Francois Hollande, center right, accompanies Syria National Coalition president Ahmed Al-Jarba after their meeting at the Elysee Palace in Paris, France, Wednesday, July 24, 2013. A senior UN team tasked with investigating the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria's civil war began a mission to Damascus Wednesday.

(AP Photo/Francois Mori)

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel gestures during a press conference on Europe's economy in Berlin, Germany. A closely watched survey has raised hopes that the 17-country eurozone may back on track for a financial recovery.

(AP Photo/Gero Breloer)

EU recovery hopes mount after survey

PAN PYLAS
 Associated Press
 LONDON (AP) — A closely watched survey has raised hopes that the laggard of the global economy — the 17-country eurozone — may be growing again. Financial information company Markit said Wednesday that its monthly purchasing managers' index — a broad gauge of economic activity — for the eurozone rose for the fourth month running, to 50.4 points in July from 48.7 the previous month. The increase reflected improvements in both the manufacturing and services sectors. That's the first time in 18 months that the survey rose above 50, the threshold that separates growth from contraction. The increase was also larger than anticipated — the consensus in the markets was for a more modest increase to 49.1. "Today's PMI data corrob-

orate our assessment that the eurozone economy is slowly moving from contraction to stabilization," said Tom Rogers, senior economic adviser at Ernst & Young. Even so, Rogers said a "real recovery remains a long way off," with jobs continuing to be shed in a number of countries in the region and amid tight bank credit conditions for companies. The European Central Bank has unveiled a new plan to boost lending to firms, but it's unclear how long it will take to have an impact. "Much more remains to be done by both the ECB and governments if the recovery in the coming 12-18 months is not to be weak and prone to setbacks," Rogers said. Still, the PMI figures will raise hopes that the recession in the eurozone, which has lasted since the fourth quarter of 2011, is coming

to an end. The recession has been largely due to the difficulties afflicting many of the countries at the forefront of Europe's debt crisis, such as Greece, Portugal and Spain. However, some of the bigger economies, including Germany, have also come off the boil in recent quarters as they feel the impact of the weak economy among key trading partners in Europe. Wednesday's figures showed solid improvements for Germany and France, the single currency bloc's two largest economies. Official figures for the second quarter are due next month and some economists think they may show the eurozone recession has come to an end. "In all, then, there are some signs that the eurozone economy is on the mend and might perhaps soon exit recession," said Ben May, □

By George! Britain's little prince gets a royal name

C. VINOGRAD
 JILL LAWLESS
 Associated Press
 LONDON (AP) — The little prince was in need of a name, and now, by George, he's got one. Make that three: George Alexander Louis. The announcement Wednesday that Prince William and his wife, Kate, had selected a moniker steeped in British history came as royal officials said the new parents were seeking quiet family time away from the flashbulbs and frenzy that accompanied the birth of their first child. While the news put to rest intense speculation over what name the couple would choose, the extreme interest around it illustrated how the 2-day-old future heir is already on his way to a lifetime of fanfare and public glare.

Kensington Palace said William and Kate were "delighted to announce" their son's name, adding that the baby will be known as "His Royal Highness Prince George of Cambridge." The name George — borne by six kings — befits the boy now third in line to the British throne and was a favorite among British bookmakers, evoking the steadfastness of the queen's father, George VI, who rallied the nation during World War II. Alexander is a name shared by three medieval Scottish kings, and Louis could be a tribute to Lord Louis Mountbatten, uncle to the queen's husband, Prince Philip, and the last British viceroy of India before it gained independence in 1947. William's

father, Prince Charles, was close to Mountbatten, who was assassinated by the Irish Republican Army in 1979.

The announcement of the name, just two days after the baby's birth, was quick by royal standards. Queen Elizabeth II and Philip took a month before settling on the name Charles for the Prince of Wales. Charles and Princess Diana took a week before settling on William's four names.

While a king usually rules under his given name, precedent shows that the prince is not hidebound by George. The first name of George VI was actually Albert, but he picked his fourth name to use as sovereign in honor of his father, George V.

For now, palace officials say, William and Kate are spending "private and quiet time for them to get to know their son." Some of their discussions may revolve around how to shield him from the media.

The young prince's relationship with the media appeared to get off to a good start — an encouraging sign for a royal family that has had tense moments with the press.

The baby slept through his first photo op Tuesday outside London's St. Mary's Hospital, while his parents beamed as they chatted easily with reporters.

"I thought, 'Is this an Oscar-winning performance?'" said Ingrid Seward, editor-in-chief of Majesty magazine. "But I think they were so genuinely overjoyed that they wanted to show off the baby." □



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First Afghan woman governor wins the Magsaysay award

MANILA, Philippines (AP) — Afghanistan's first and only female governor and a humanitarian worker from Myanmar's Kachin minority are among this year's recipients of the Ramon Magsaysay Awards, often regarded as Asia's version of the Nobel Prize.

The Manila-based Ramon Magsaysay Awards Foundation announced Wednesday that it had selected three individuals and two organizations as this year's awardees, including a Filipino doctor, an independent commission eradicating corruption

in Indonesia and a civil society organization in Nepal created and run by human trafficking victims.

The awards, named after a popular Philippine president who died in a 1957 plane crash, honor people and groups who change their societies for the better.

Habiba Sarabi, 57, was chosen for helping build a functioning local government and pushing for education and women's rights in Afghanistan's Bamyan province despite working in a violent and impoverished environment in which

discrimination is pervasive, the foundation said. Public education and the ratio of female students have increased in her province, where more women are taking up careers that were forbidden under the 1996-2001 Taliban regime. "In the face of widespread hostilities toward women assuming public roles, her courage and determination are outstanding," the foundation said of Sarabi, a member of an ethnic and religious minority in Afghanistan. □



This photo released by the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation shows 2013 Ramon Magsaysay awardee Habiba Sarabi, 57, from Afghanistan.

(AP Photo/RMAF)

First same-sex civil union legalized in Colombia

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — A Colombian judge has for the first time legalized the civil union of a same-sex couple.

One of the pair, Gonzalo Ruiz, told The Associated Press just after Wednesday's ceremony that he considers himself "civilly married" to his partner, Carlos Hernando Rivera.

About 100 people attended and threw rice at the couple, who have been together for two decades. The ceremony follows Con-

gress' failure in April to pass a law legislating civil unions. The Constitutional Court had ordered it to do so in 2011, ruling that legislators failed then gay couples could join in civil unions before judges.

A previous ruling by the high court has allowed same-sex couples in Colombia to enjoy since 2007 many of the benefits of marriage, including inheritance, pensions and health and death benefits. □

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Asylum seeker boat sinks off Indonesia; 189 saved

ADI MARSIELA
Associated Press
BANDUNG, Indonesia (AP) — Rescuers were searching Wednesday for several asylum seekers still believed missing a day after their boat sank in Indonesian waters on the way to Australia. Nearly 190 survivors were brought to safety and nine bodies were recovered.

The incident comes days after Prime Minister Kevin Rudd changed Australia's refugee policy so that people who arrive by boat will no longer be allowed to settle in the country. The move was a response to domestic political pressure and a string of accidents involving rickety boats packed with asylum seekers bound for Australia.

Local police chief Lt. Col. Dedy Kusuma said 189 people were rescued and nine bodies were recovered after the tugboat sank Tuesday night about 5 kilometers (3 miles) off the coast of West Java's Cianjur district. It was not clear how many people were missing.

West Java police spokesman Col. Martinus Sitompul said the survivors included a pregnant Sri Lankan woman who was being treated at a health center in the town of Cidaun. A baby boy and a 10-year-old girl were among the dead.

Sitompul said the group was believed to consist of around 204 migrants from Sri Lanka, Iran and Iraq. They departed Tuesday morning from Jayanti, a coastal town in Cianjur, using a smaller boat that was supposed to meet a larger ship at sea to complete the journey to Australia. Their overloaded boat, built to carry only 150 passengers, sank about nine

hours into the trip due to a leak. Some of the migrants scrambled for the lifeboat, while others swam before being rescued, he said, citing Iraqi survivor Ali Akbar. Kusuma said the search for the remaining migrants believed missing would continue, involving police, fishermen and local villagers. Rochmali, a rescuer at the scene who goes by one name, said the exact num-

ber of missing remained unclear since some survivors may have fled to avoid authorities. The asylum seeker issue has been a longstanding dilemma for both Indonesia and Australia. Last week, Indonesia decided to stop issuing visas on arrival to Iranians because a growing number of them have been caught smuggling drugs or using

Indonesia as a transit point for seeking asylum in Australia. As of last Friday, Australia said all newly arrived refugees would be resettled on the island nation of Papua New Guinea, though their claims for asylum will still be assessed in Australia and at detention camps in Papua New Guinea and the tiny island nation of Nauru. Australia will help genuine

refugees settle in Papua New Guinea. Others can return to their home nations or a third country other than Australia. The move, condemned by refugee and human rights advocates, is an attempt to stem the flood of asylum seekers who travel to Australia from ports in Indonesia and Malaysia. Hundreds have died attempting the journey in recent years. Indonesia is a popular exit point because its capital, Jakarta, lies just 500 kilometers (310 miles) from Australia's Christmas Island. More than 15,000 asylum seekers have arrived in Australia by boat this year. Rudd said the latest boat incident highlights the need for the policy shift. "Too many innocent people have been lost at sea," he told reporters in Melbourne on Wednesday. "The asylum seeker policy we've adopted is about sending a very clear message to people smugglers that if you try to come to Australia by boat you will not be settled in Australia. ... That is all about destroying the people smugglers' business model," Rudd said. □



A police officer carries a child who appears to be unconscious after a boat carrying asylum seekers sank off Java island, in Cianjur, West Java, Indonesia, Wednesday, July 24, 2013.

(AP Photo)

Morales returns envoys to EU after apologies

LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP) — Bolivian President Evo Morales says he's returning his ambassadors to Spain, France, Italy and Portugal after the European nations apologized for refusing to let his plane fly over amid apparent suspicions U.S. leaker Edward Snowden was aboard. Morales told reporters



Wednesday he's not fully satisfied with the apologies but maintaining respectful relations is important. Bolivia says the countries forced Morales to make an unscheduled 14-hour stop on July 2 in Vienna where he eventually allowed Austrian border police to search it. Morales says the countries

were acting at Washington's behest. He was returning home from Moscow, where Snowden has been holed at Sheremetyevo airport after his I disclosures about the U.S. National Security Agency's spying on its citizens and other nations. Bolivia and Washington have lacked ambassadors since 2008. □



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Aruba's I Am Your Island 2014 Calendar Has Arrived

ORANJESTAD - Aruba's popular and scenic 2014 calendar is now available at a variety of merchants and souvenir stores and hotel stores throughout the island. The 12x12 inch sized calendar has ample room to note daily appointments, personal comments and mark special occasions. The 2014 calendar again compliments Aruba I am Your Island, a book which chronicles the island's character; her colors-warm and majestic; the history-obscure and elusive; its folklore-amusing and mythological.



The stunning colorful photographs chosen for the 2014 calendar, utilizing HDR Photography (High Dynamic Range), feature Aruba's tropical scenes: its sunrises, beautiful beaches, intensive col-

ors and its island charm. From the pristine beaches of Eagle Beach to the rocky caves at Arikok National Park, each photo in this large wall calendar tells a story of Aruba. As a bonus, each month

includes a local favorite island recipe such as Chobolobo, Panlevi and Bolo di Pan.

Each year, the challenge to capture different and exciting photographs of Aruba in a new and exciting way is always accomplished by photographer and part time Aruba resident, Werner J. Bertsch, www.WernerJBertsch.com. Various elements such as light, shadows and contrast can change each subject, but through his years as a photographer, Werner has learned to be patient and wait for that moment when the subject is just perfect.

In addition to photography and publishing, Werner also teaches photography classes in Aruba. Workshops and/or one-on-one instructions offer various elements and topics depending on the student's interest and levels of achievement. Information about the workshops can be found at www.CaribbeanPhotoWorkshop.com.

If you missed to purchase the calendar in Aruba you may also order it at www.BluewaterIslands.com.



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PALM BEACH - Now The Blue Lobster Restaurant forms part of the "Ten Best" family. Being part of the Ten Best brings along an important international recognition, additional to the recognition already bestowed to us by TripAdvisor, says Mr. German Castano, proud owner of this small but yet incredibly well-managed restaurant only 17 months in business and already, forms part of the best of Aruba. All are invited to enjoy the excellent food, professional service and reasonable prices of this excellent eatery.

10 Best Says...

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places at which you can have a delectable meal without dressing up for the occasion. This small, intimate and very welcoming family-owned restaurant, operated by German Castano and executive chef Sandro Herold, features international cuisine, over 18 Lobster Dishes to choose

from and is winner of The Certificate Of Excellence Award by Tripadvisor for 2012 and 2013. An extensive wine list and a well stocked bar including exotic Caribbean cocktails and house drinks complement attractive dishes like the Lobster Ravioli or the Spicy Lobster Casserole. Non-lobster guests can opt for Chef Sandro's Tuna & Shrimp or Scallop Combinations, or savor a juicy Filet Mignon -- if it's meat-only. And if there's still a spot for a signature dessert, try The Blue Lobster's Tiramisu, it's ample for two, but only if one is willing to share. Enjoy! □



Beauty On The Beach

Yadimi La Bastida

She is from Caracas Venezuela. This is her second visit to the island. She loves Aruba's Beaches.

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Will Alex Rodriguez play for Yankees again?

RONALD BLUM

AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Alex Rodriguez certainly leads the New York Yankees in headlines this season even though he hasn't played a single major league game. Injuries have kept him away from the team since last year's playoffs, and now Rodriguez faces discipline from Major League Baseball in its drug investigation, possibly up to a lifetime ban.

The three-time American League Most Valuable Player who turns 38 Saturday is among more than a dozen players MLB has targeted following allegations they were linked to a Florida clinic accused of distributing performance-enhancing drugs.

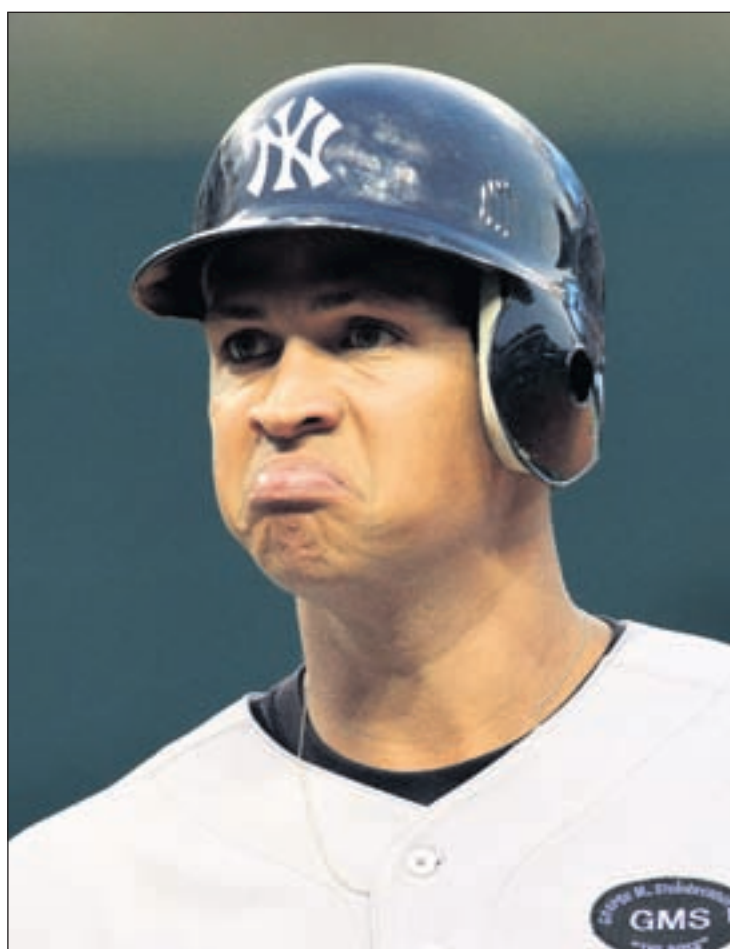
After Ryan Braun's agreement to accept a 65-game suspension earlier this week, attention has turned to Rodriguez, who four years ago admitted using PEDs while with Texas from

2001-03. He has repeatedly denied using them since, and MLB has never said he failed a test.

Lawyers for MLB and the players' association were set to resume discussions about the Biogenesis investigation Thursday. Though it was unclear who might be penalized next, all eyes were on A-Rod.

The Yankees expect Rodriguez to be accused of using PEDs over multiple seasons, of recruiting other athletes for the clinic, of attempting to obstruct MLB's investigation, and of not being truthful with MLB in the past when he discussed his relationship with Dr. Anthony Galea, who pleaded guilty two years ago to a federal charge of bringing unapproved drugs into the United States from Canada.

"The mess seems very large indeed," said John Thorn, baseball's official historian. "If a lifetime suspension is being brooded about and



In this July 28, 2010 file photo, New York Yankees' Alex Rodriguez reacts after he popped out in the second inning in a baseball game against the Cleveland Indians in Cleveland.

Associated Press

a plea bargain would involve something lesser but still very substantial, that's a whole bucket of tar dumped on his legacy."

With 647 home runs, fifth on the career list and 115 shy of matching Barry Bonds' career record, Rodriguez is among the most prodigious sluggers in baseball history. And his record contracts have put him in the spotlight, first a \$252 million, 10-year deal with Texas that started in 2001 and later a \$275 million, 10-year agreement with the Yankees that began in 2008.

But his body has been breaking down and he's been on the disabled list six times in six years. Right hip surgery in March 2009 was followed by left hip surgery this January, three months after the Yankees repeatedly pinch hit for A-Rod and benched him during the playoffs.

Continued on page 22

NL Capsules

Bruce Bochy wins 1,500th as manager as Giants beat Reds

The Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Pablo Sandoval hit a two-run double to help Bruce Bochy earn his 1,500th win as a manager, and the San Francisco Giants split a straight doubleheader with the Cincinnati Reds with a 5-3 victory in the nightcap Tuesday.

Hunter Pence hit an RBI single, Gregor Blanco had a sacrifice fly, and Brandon Belt added an RBI ground-out in San Francisco's first win in six tries against the Reds this season after being outscored 34-6 in the first five meetings — including 11-0 on Monday night

and 9-3 in the opener Tuesday. The Reds had 10 hits after combining for 32 in the first two games.

The teams were forced to make up a July 4 rainout at Great American Ball Park. Cincinnati batted last and wore home uniforms as the visiting team.

CARDINALS 4, PHILLIES 1

ST. LOUIS (AP) — Shelby Miller threw six shutout innings and Allen Craig drove in a pair of runs to lead St. Louis to a win over Philadelphia. Miller (10-6) gave up three hits while striking out six and walking one. He is the third St. Louis starter to reach double-digits in wins, join-

ing Adam Wainwright (13-5) and Lance Lynn (11-5). The Cardinals have won four of five and 10 of 13. Philadelphia lost its third straight game.

Edward Mujica picked up his 29th save in 31 opportunities. Yadier Molina and David Freese also drove in runs for the Cardinals. Jonathan Pettibone (5-4) allowed three runs on seven hits over five innings for the Phillies.

PIRATES 5, NATIONALS 1

WASHINGTON (AP) — Gerrit Cole pitched seven strong innings to end a personal three-game losing streak and added an RBI single to



San Francisco Giants' Pablo Sandoval drives in two runs with a double against the Cincinnati Reds during the first inning of the second game of a baseball doubleheader on Tuesday, July 23, 2013, in San Francisco.

Associated Press

lead Pittsburgh over Washington.

Cole (5-3) turned in the best outing of his young career, allowing a run on two hits in his eighth career start. Pedro Alvarez hom-

ered and singled, and Russell Martin had three hits for the Pirates, who won their third straight game.

Wilson Ramos homered for Washington, which had just three hits. □

Phelpsian load for Franklin at worlds: 8 events

ANDREW DAMPF
AP Sports Writer

BARCELONA, Spain (AP) — Rebecca Soni is taking the year off. Allison Schmitt didn't qualify.

Still, with teenagers Missy Franklin and Katie Ledecky leading the way, the United States women's swim team has lofty goals at the world championships, where the traditional pool events start Sunday. "Yes, we don't have Rebecca or Allison, but Missy and Ledecky are here, and Breeja Larson is starting to come into her own. And then we've got veterans like Dana Vollmer and Natalie Coughlin. So it's a pretty good mix of young swimmers and veterans," U.S. women's coach Dave Salo said Tuesday.

"I think we're still real solid and we're going to do some damage on the podium." Expect Franklin to do a big chunk of that damage. She's planning to swim a Michael Phelps-like

load of eight events inside the Palau Sant Jordi, the arena where Phelps first swam an extensive program a decade ago at the last worlds in Barcelona.

That's one more event than Franklin swam at last year's London Games, when she won four golds and a bronze. Her schedule this time includes the 100- and 200-meter freestyle, all three backstroke events — 50, 100 and 200 — and all three relays.

"It is a big load, but she had a big preparation for that in London, and I think she's able to handle it," Salo said. "And we have people to help on the relay prelims, so that will give her a chance to rest a bit."

No swimmer — male or female — has ever won eight golds at a world championships. Phelps, of course, won a record eight at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Franklin finished fourth in the 200 free and fifth in

the 100 in London, and she has focused on improving those events.

"Missy is swimming much more maturely in the 100 and 200 free," Salo said.

While Franklin's potential was well known before London, Ledecky burst onto the scene a year ago as a 15-year-old when she won the 800 free with the second fastest time in history. Then at the U.S. trials last month, Ledecky became the first American woman to qualify for worlds in the 200, 400, 800 and 1,500 free. And even though she's wavered over the 200, Salo said she's planning to swim all four events.

"The 200 might be a bit of a stretch, but she's training really well and I think she has a lot in her," he said.

Without Soni in the breaststroke events, veteran Jessica Hardy and the 21-year-old Larson, at her first worlds, will get their chances.



Missy Franklin, right, hugs Katie Ledecky on the podium after Franklin won the women's 200-meter freestyle during the U.S. National Championships swimming meet Wednesday, June 26, 2013, in Indianapolis. Franklin won in 1 minute, 55.56 seconds.

Associated Press

The 30-year-old Coughlin is the oldest member of the team. She's also the only American woman on the team who also competed at the previous worlds in Barcelona a decade ago. Vollmer, at 25, is the other established veteran and a

favorite in the 100 and 200 fly.

Then there's 20-year-old Maya Dirado, who showed off her versatility by qualifying for the 200 fly, 400 IM and 4x200 relay after a strong season at Stanford University. □

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Krzyzewski begins quest for third straight gold

JON KRAWCZYNSKI

AP Basketball Writer
LAS VEGAS (AP) — Mike Krzyzewski thought he was finished with USA Basketball. He said he was done, too.

After helping Team USA win consecutive Olympic gold medals, there appeared little left for him to accomplish. After the team won in London last summer, Krzyzewski prepared to walk away.

It didn't take long for Jerry Colangelo to know that Krzyzewski wasn't as resolute in his stance as he made it seem. Just a couple of weeks after their triumph in London, the two reconvened in Springfield for the Hall of Fame induction ceremony. And that's when Colangelo, the managing director for USA Basketball, knew there was still a chance.

"He was having withdrawal already," Colangelo said. "He started talking about the future. No commitments, but it was there." Ten months after Colangelo first saw that gleam return to Krzyzewski's eye, and two months after the coach made his return official, the two men are back



In this Aug. 4, 2012, file photo, United States coach Mike Krzyzewski signals to players during a preliminary men's basketball game against Lithuania at the 2012 Summer Olympics in London.

Associated Press

to work at a four-day camp that began Monday.

"Throughout the year I did not think I would be coaching (Team USA)," Krzyzewski told The Associated Press before the camp kicked off. "I just felt that that wasn't going to happen. But then after discussions, not just talking with Jerry, but my staff and my family, to be given that opportunity again, it's something I'm really excited about and feel very honored and

privileged to have that opportunity."

When Krzyzewski leads the Americans at the Rio Olympics in 2016, he'll join Henry Iba as the only coaches in U.S. history to coach in three Olympics. Together with Colangelo, Krzyzewski has changed the culture of USA Basketball and restored some sense of pride, professionalism and prestige to a brand that was tarnished after a bronze medal finish in Athens in 2004.

A big sign of the change? The simple fact that they're even holding a camp this week. Because the Ameri-

cans won gold in London last summer, they do not have to participate in any qualifying tournaments this summer for the 2014 World Cup in Madrid.

Quite literally, there is nothing to play for this summer. And yet this is still the place to be.

"How Coach K does that is he just leads," said Cavaliers point guard Kyrie Irving, who played for Krzyzewski at Duke and is one of the hopefuls at the camp this week. "Different things to motivate you, to get you going, to always be your best, not only as a player, but as a person. That's

what true leaders do."

Twenty-eight of the best young players in the country are here for four days of workouts that essentially mark the kickoff of 2016 preparations. Anthony Davis, who played sparingly last summer, is the only player with Olympic experience. Others like Damian Lillard, Irving, John Wall and Paul George have come to try to make a good impression in hopes of being included on the World Cup team next summer.

No roster decisions will be made this week, and they are still holding out hope that some of the younger players from London — Kevin Durant, James Harden, Russell Westbrook and Kevin Love, among others — will decide to play in Spain next year. But Krzyzewski will also use the time to get acquainted with new assistants Tom Thibodeau and Monty Williams and teach the young players about what is expected of them in this program.

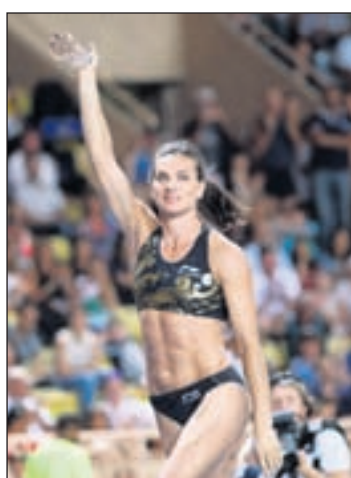
"People want to be with USA Basketball. They should," Krzyzewski said. "But for a while there, they didn't. It enjoys now, primarily because of Jerry's leadership, a really high status, which we need to maintain. You're not just given that status. You have to earn it." □

Olsinbayeva to quit after Moscow worlds

MOSCOW (AP) — Two-time Olympic pole vault champion Yelena Isinbayeva says she will end her career after next month's athletics world championships in Moscow.

Isinbayeva has dominated the sport for a decade, setting 17 outdoor world records and 13 indoors. Her most recent was indoors in Stockholm in February. She won the Olympics in 2004 and 2008 and took bronze last year in London.

Isinbayeva was quoted by the R-Sport news agency as saying Tuesday that "my career will finish 100 percent at the world championships," which will be



In this July 20, 2012, file photo, Russia's Yelena Isinbayeva waves during the women's pole vault event at the Herculis international athletics meeting, at the Louis II Stadium in Monaco.

Associated Press

Aug. 10-18 at Moscow's Luzhniki stadium.

She had said after the London Olympics that she hoped to compete in the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games. □

Wawrinka, Monaco, Youzhny advance at Swiss Open



Mikhail Youzhny of Russia returns a ball to Pablo Andujar of Spain during a second round match at the Suisse Open tennis tournament in Gstaad, Switzerland, Wednesday July 24, 2013.

Associated Press

GSTAAD, Switzerland (AP) — Stanislas Wawrinka advanced to the Swiss Open quarterfinals on Wednesday by beating Daniel Gimeno-Traver of Spain, 7-5, 7-6 (4).

Wawrinka was cruising at 4-0 up in the second set, then failed to serve out the match at 5-3 before clinching victory in the tiebreaker. Seeded players won all four second-round matches, one day before top-seeded Roger Federer begins his campaign in the clay-court event against Daniel Brands of Germany.

Fourth-seeded Juan Monaco of Argentina eased past Guillermo Garcia-Lopez of Spain 6-1, 6-2 under warm sunshine in the ski resort venue.

Monaco will face Mikhail Youzhny of Russia on Friday, in the same half of the draw as Federer.

Youzhny, the No. 6 seed, beat his second-round opponent Pablo Andujar of Spain, 6-3, 4-6, 6-3.

Fifth-seeded Feliciano Lopez of Spain won 6-4, 6-3 against Andrey Kuznetsov of Russia to set up a quarterfinal against Wawrinka. □

Inquiry uncovers proof of Pantani, Ullrich doping



In this Aug. 2, 1998 file photo, Tour de France winner Marco Pantani of Italy, right, and second-placed Jan Ullrich of Germany pose on the podium after the 21st and final stage of the Tour de France cycling race between Melun and Paris.

Associated Press

GREG KELLER
Associated Press

PARIS (AP) — A French inquiry into sports doping has uncovered proof that 1998 Tour de France champion Marco Pantani and runner-up Jan Ullrich used a banned blood booster to fuel their performances.

France's senate, after a five-month investigation focused on fighting sports doping, released a report Wednesday that confirms what many riders have long said: use of the banned substance EPO was rife in cycling in the late 1990s, before a test for the drug had been developed. Pantani was suspended in 1999 from the Giro after failing a random blood test, and his career was damaged by several doping investigations. He died in 2004 at 34 of an accidental drug overdose.

Ullrich, the 1997 Tour winner, has admitted to blood doping and last year was stripped of his third-place finish in the 2005 Tour.

The 1998 Tour de France was notable for the major scandal that emerged with the discovery of widespread doping on the French Festina team. The subsequent police crackdown led to seven of the original 21 teams either withdrawing or being

ejected from the Tour.

Other star riders whose positive doping tests were disclosed by the senate report Wednesday include double stage winner Mario Cipollini of Italy and Laurent Jalabert of France. Kevin Livingston, an American who finished 17th in that year's Tour, also tested positive for EPO, according to documents included in the senate report.

Third-place finisher, American Bobby Julich, last year admitted to his own EPO use during the 1998 Tour. In 1999, Lance Armstrong won the first of his seven straight titles, which he was stripped of this year after admitting to using banned substances for all of those victories. Senators took pains to point out that the 1998 Tour de France disclosures represented only a few pages of the 800-page report released Wednesday, which mainly focused on establishing the size of the sports doping problem and identifying ways of improving anti-doping measures. The senate inquiry heard from 138 athletes, drug testers and officials from 18 sports, including rugby and soccer. The report comprises 60 proposals for improving anti-doping measures, including establishing "truth and rec-

onciliation commissions" within each sport; making sure that all sporting events taking place in France fall under the watch of French anti-doping authorities; and testing for a wider range of illicit substances. Senators also propose taking disciplinary power away from sports federations and giving it to the French anti-doping body AFLD. The positive tests disclosed in the senate report were uncovered via retrospective testing in 2004 and 2005, by French anti-doping authorities seeking to perfect their test for EPO. The results had since been stored without the identities of the riders being released. Senator Jean-Jacques Lozach, one of the report's authors, said retrospective testing is one of the ways authorities can stay ahead of cheating riders.

"Given the performance of Chris Froome, the winner of the 2013 Tour de France, there were doubts expressed and suspicions raised. In light of today's controls these suspicions are not legitimate or justified," Lozach said. "Who knows if in three or five years these doubts won't be justified or legitimized by retrospective controls." Brian Cookson, the head

of British Cycling who is challenging Pat McQuaid for the presidency of the sport's governing body UCI in September elections, called the senate report "a terrible indictment of the people responsible, and those with the most responsibility for the culture within the sport are the UCI." In a statement, Cookson pledged to implement a fully independent investigation into doping in cy-

cling.

"We owe it to those who chose to ride dope-free and to the fans to understand the mistakes of the past and make sure they are not repeated," Cookson said. Another former French pro whose positive doping test emerged Wednesday said senators risked tarring a cleaner new generation of cyclists with the disclosure of 15-year-old doping revelations. □


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AL Capsules

Lester pitches Red Sox to 6-2 win over Rays

The Associated Press
OSTON (AP) — Jon Lester matched his season high with eight strikeouts and overcame homers by Wil Myers and Evan Longoria as the Boston Red Sox remained in first place with a 6-2 win over the Tampa Bay Rays on Tuesday night. The Red Sox moved 1½ games ahead of the Rays in the AL East and stayed atop the division for the 58th consecutive day. The loss ended the Rays' six-game winning streak and was just their third in 21 games, a surge that began when they were in fourth place, trailing the Red Sox by seven games. Jose Iglesias hit a two-run single for Boston, which is 3-4 since its four-game winning streak. Lester (9-6) gave up two runs and seven hits with no walks in 6 1-3 innings. Four Red Sox pitchers combined for 13 strikeouts. Roberto Hernandez (5-11) allowed three runs in five innings.

YANKEES 5, RANGERS 4
ARLINGTON, Texas (AP) — Eduardo Nunez hit a tying triple, Brent Lillibridge followed with a go-ahead single and New York rallied against All-Star closer Joe Nathan in the ninth inning to beat Texas. The Yankees' comeback got started when Vernon Wells drew a one-out walk against Nathan (1-1), who had converted 15 consecutive save chances and 31 of 32 this season. Texas had been 51-0 when leading after eight innings. Mariano Rivera, who set up Nathan's save in the All-Star game a week earlier, struck out two in a perfect ninth for his 32nd save, extending his career record to 640. Joba Chamberlain (2-0) got help in his perfect eighth when center fielder Brett Gardner made two incredible catches. The Rangers erased a 3-0 deficit with four unearned runs in the sixth after Lillibridge's error at third base.



Boston Red Sox starting pitcher Jon Lester delivers to the Tampa Bay Rays during the first inning of a baseball game at Fenway Park in Boston on Tuesday, July 23, 2013.

Associated Press

Texas led 4-3 after Mitch Moreland greeted reliever Boone Logan with a two-run homer.

TIGERS 6, WHITE SOX 2
CHICAGO (AP) — Rick Porcello pitched four-hit ball over seven scoreless innings, Jhonny Peralta homered and Detroit took advantage of four errors in a victory over Chicago. With MVP and Triple Crown winner Miguel Cabrera sidelined by a sore hip, the AL Central leaders again got all the help they needed from Chicago. One night after matching what was a season high with three errors and giving up five unearned runs in a 7-3 loss to the Tigers, the White Sox managed to outdo themselves. The four errors matched their highest total since a game at Kansas City on April 6, 2011, and gave them 68 in all — two shy of last year's total. They also matched a season high by falling 19 games below .500. □

Alex Rodriguez Continued from page 18

Just when it appeared he was ready to rejoin the Yankees this week, the team said he strained his left quadriceps. Rodriguez has acknowledged taking PEDs before baseball started penalizing their use. In 2009, he attributed his decision to being "young and stupid" and agreed to work for the Taylor Hooton Foundation to combat steroids. If it turns out he was violating drug rules all along, his reputation may be beyond repair. "There's no question it's been diminished, and more than many of his contemporaries that also were involved, because in his case the perception now is that the use has been ongoing," NBC and MLB Network broadcaster Bob Costas said. "Now that could change if he somehow successfully defends

himself, but if that doesn't happen, then the perception would be that it was not confined to a certain period of time, so it would be impossible to parse how much of his performance was unaided and how much was aided. The shame of all of it is that he clearly would have been an all-time great player without ever using performance-enhancing drugs." Fox broadcaster and former major league catcher Tim Lincecum said he regards Rodriguez "unfortunately, the way I view Ryan Braun, and that's not good. And I viewed A-Rod as a really good guy. Tarnished is understated in these times." While positive tests lead to a set series of punishments — 50 games for a first offense, 100 games for a second and a lifetime ban for a third — MLB is not bound by that for players in the Biogenesis probe because the fixed penalties are only for failed urine and blood tests.



In this Oct. 18, 2012, file photo, New York Yankees' Alex Rodriguez watches from the dugout during Game 4 of the American League championship series against the Detroit Tigers in Detroit. Injuries have kept him off the field for more than half the season and now A-Rod faces discipline from Major League Baseball in its drug investigation, possibly up to a lifetime ban.

Associated Press

"In theory, they could be suspended for five games or 500 games," union head Michael Weiner said. Braun negotiated the length of his penalty rather than contest it before an arbitrator. If Rodriguez were to file a grievance, a suspension probably would be pushed back until after a decision and would be

delayed until next year. Vincent learned in the Steve Howe case that lifetime bans are difficult to enforce. He suspended the pitcher for life in June 1992 for Howe's seventh incident related to drugs or alcohol, but Howe was reinstated that November by arbitrator George Nicolau. Despite that, Vincent feels

current Commissioner Bud Selig should not be reticent about pursuing a stiff penalty against Rodriguez. "I think he ought to come down very hard. I don't think he has much to lose, and everything to gain," Vincent said. Rodriguez has been a non-factor in the Yankees' season, and much of his \$28 million salary this year is being covered by insurance. He is owed an additional \$86 million in salary over the next four seasons. Costas sees a rules change regarding the salary in long-term contracts as the most effective deterrent to drug use. He says management and players should reopen the labor contract and add a new provision. "If you are found to have used PEDs and you exhaust your appeals ... and you're in the midst of a long-term contract, the team has the right at its discretion to void the contract," he said. "That's an enormous disincentive." □



Google unveils new Nexus 7, Internet TV device

MICHAEL LIEDTKE

AP Technology Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) —

Google is betting consumers will pay slightly more for a sleeker, more powerful version of its Nexus 7 tablet as the Internet company escalates its rivalry with Apple and Amazon.com in technology's key battleground — the mobile computing market.

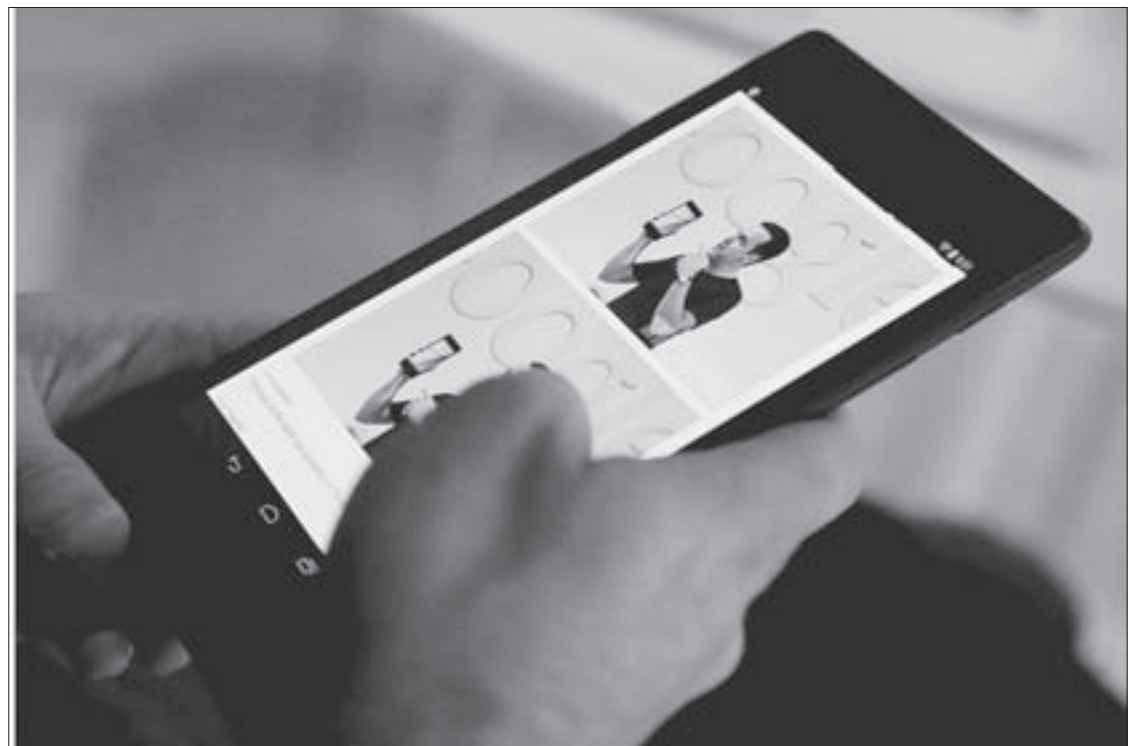
The fancier devices unveiled Wednesday in San Francisco will go on sale in the U.S. next Tuesday in Google's online store and numerous retailers with brick-and-mortar stores.

Among other things, the souped-up line of Nexus tablets will boast a higher-definition 7-inch (17.5-centimeter) display screen and a processor that promises to be nearly as twice as fast. Dual stereo speakers have been added for richer sound, and the device's

company's attempt to make it easier for people to access Internet content on their TVs. Chromecast is a small stick roughly the same size as a thumb drive that can be plugged into an HDMI port on flat-panel TVs. It brings Netflix, Google's YouTube site and other Internet content to what is usually the biggest screen in households.

Forrester Research analyst Sarah Rotman Epps said Chromecast could undermine Apple in the still-nascent market to plug streaming devices into TVs, just as the Nexus tablets have siphoned some sales away from Apple's iPad.

Google's previous products designed to connect TV sets to the Internet haven't worked out well. The company initially tried to embed an operating system called Google TV into sets made by TV



Hugo Barra, vice president Android product management at Google, uses the new Nexus 7 tablet on Wednesday, July 24, 2013, in San Francisco.
Associated Press



The new Google Chromecast device is shown on Wednesday, July 24, 2013, in San Francisco.

battery duration has been extended to 10 hours for Web browsing, an increase of about an hour.

On other fronts, Google Inc. also unveiled a gadget that will lean on its widely used Chrome Web browser and take aim at Apple on another front — the living room.

The new device, called Chromecast, is part of the

manufacturers, but that flopped. Last year, Google introduced an orb-like device called the Nexus Q in hopes of delivering more Internet video to flat-panel TVs, only to quickly pull the product from the market.

"Chromecast looks like a smart and disruptive device," Rotman Epps said. "Maybe it took the other failures for Google to get

it right." Google wants to have a presence on TVs because it could open up a lucrative new channel for it to sell more ads, which bring in most of its revenue. In a show of its determination to make inroads on TVs, Google started selling Chromecast for just \$35 on Wednesday. That price undercuts the most popular Internet-streaming devices made by Apple and Roku. An Apple TV box sells for \$99, while the least expensive Roku box capable of showing high-definition video goes for \$80. Roku, a company that formed within Internet video subscription service Netflix Inc., also sells an Internet streaming stick similar to Chromecast for \$100.

Earlier this year, Apple revealed that it has sold more than 13 million of its streaming boxes. Roku said its sales of streaming boxes surpassed 5 million units this year. The Chromecast device connects with smartphones, tablets and personal computers to beam Internet connect

to TVs. The Apple and Roku streaming boxes rely on a standard remote control to select Internet content.

As an enticement to get people to try Chromecast, Google is offering three months of free Netflix service with a purchase of the Internet-streaming stick. That translates to a \$24 value, leaving the cost of the device at \$11 for those who would have gotten Netflix anyway.

As for the Nexus 7, the extra firepower added to the second generation of the tablets will come with a higher price. A model with 16 gigabytes of storage will sell for \$229, a \$30 per increase from the current Nexus 7 released a year ago. That's still 30 percent below the \$329 that Apple Inc. charges for its iPad Mini. A comparable Kindle Fire HD tablet from Amazon.com Inc. currently sells for \$199.

A 32-gigabyte version of the Nexus 7 will sell for \$269, a \$20 price increase.

The price hike for the Nexus 7 comes at a time when

more people have been showing a preference for less expensive tablets. Google helped propel the trend with last year's introduction of the Nexus line, contributing to pressure for Apple to come out with the iPad Mini as an alternative to its top-selling tablets with a 10-inch (25-centimeter) screen.

Google is confident the Nexus 7 will still look like a great value once consumers see how much more powerful the new models are, said Sundar Pichai, an executive who oversees the company's Android and Chrome software.

The iPad Mini has driven down the average selling price of Apple's tablets, hurting the Cupertino, California, company's profit margins.

Even at a lower price, the Nexus tablets haven't been as popular as the iPad. Pichai said the Nexus products account for about 10 percent, or 7 million, of the roughly 70 million tablets now running Android software. □

Mixed earns reports send stocks mostly sideways

MATTHEW CRAFT
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A gloomy outlook from Caterpillar, the world's largest construction equipment company, tugged the stock market lower Wednesday.

The meager drop gave the stock market two consecutive days of losses, the first time that's happened all month.

Caterpillar's earnings fell 43 percent in the second quarter as China's economy slowed and commodity prices sank. The company also warned of slowing revenue and profit, and its stock dropped \$2.08, or 2 percent, to \$83.44.

Slight losses spread across a wide variety of companies, with nine of 10 industry groups in the Standard & Poor's 500 index ending lower.

The holdouts were technology companies, which got a lift from Apple's surging stock. Despite reporting lower quarterly earnings Tuesday, the maker of tablets, smartphones and computers still managed to beat analysts' estimates, thanks to rising shipments

of iPhones. Apple jumped \$21.52, or 5 percent, to \$440.51.

The Dow Jones industrial average fell 25.50 points, or 0.2 percent, at 15,542.24.



Specialist Douglas Johnson is reflected in a screen at his post on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. A mix of good and bad earnings reports from big companies kept the stock market moving sideways during trading on Wednesday, July 24, 2013.
(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

The Standard & Poor's 500 index fell 6.45 points, or 0.4 percent, to 1,685.94. The technology-heavy Nasdaq composite index edged up 0.33 of a point, or less than 0.1 percent, to 3,579.60.

Although far from a blockbuster earnings season, the larger trend for corporate profits looks good. Analysts forecast that second-quarter earnings for companies

in the S&P 500 increased 4.2 percent over the same period last year, according to S&P Capital IQ. At the start of the month, they

were looking for earnings to rise 2.8 percent. More than six out of every 10 companies have surpassed Wall Street's profit targets.

"Yes, they're beating expectations, but expectations are so low," said Brad McMillan, chief investment officer at Commonwealth Financial. The overall number masks some worrisome

trends, he said.

Financial firms, such as Goldman Sachs and Capital One, have posted the highest rate of earnings growth of any industry. Pull their results out of the total, however, and earnings are on track to slump 3.5 percent, according to FactSet.

"You can't call this a blow-out quarter so far," McMillan said.

Another 25 big companies, including Visa and Qualcomm, are releasing reports after the closing bell. Among them, Facebook surged 14 percent to \$30.31 in after-hours trading after reporting income and revenue that easily beat analysts' estimates.

Surging demand for pickup trucks in the U.S. helped Ford Motor post higher quarterly profits. Sales in China also jumped 47 percent in the first six months of the year. The second-largest car company in the U.S. raised its profit forecast and its stock climbed 43 cents, or 3 percent, to \$17.37. AT&T dropped 41 cents, or 1 percent, to \$35.40. Higher costs hit AT&T's profits in the latest quarter. □

Dell's founder boosts offer to buy company

BREE FOWLER
AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A group led by Dell's founder raised its offer for the struggling computer maker Wednesday in hopes of attracting more shareholder support for its plan to take the company private.

The 10-cent per share increase came just hours before Dell's shareholders were scheduled to vote on the previous \$13.65 per share offer from Michael Dell and investment firm Silver Lake Partners.

But the extra money comes with a catch, a stipulation that the offer's fate be decided by the will of the shareholders who choose to vote in favor of the plan or against it, leaving out those who don't vote at all. Previously, non-voting shareholders were counted as opponents of the proposal. The Round Rock, Texas, company delayed its shareholder meeting for the second time in two weeks, moving it to Aug. 2 to give the special committee of its board time to consider the offer. The meeting had been set for Wednesday, after being delayed the week before in a sign that the offer didn't have enough shareholder support.

Michael Dell and Silver Lake said Wednesday that the new offer represents their "best and final proposal" and increases the total amount they are willing to pay shareholders by about \$150 million, valuing the company at more than \$24 billion. The group wants to change the conditions for approval to require that a majority of the shares voted, excluding Michael Dell's stake, be in favor of the proposal. Under the current terms, the group needs a majority of all the company's outstanding shares, whether they are voted or not, excluding Michael Dell's stake, to vote in favor of it. The group originally gave the committee until Wednesday evening to respond to the offer, but later extended it to the morning of Aug. 2, the day of the shareholder vote. □

Coca-Cola, PepsiCo see soda declines continue

CANDICE CHOI
AP Food Industry Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — It seems that not even pop star Beyonce or new, lower-calorie options can convince Americans to drink more soda.

Coca-Cola Co., PepsiCo Inc. and Dr Pepper Snapple Group Inc. all sold less soda in the second quarter in North America, dashing hopes for the moment that splashy new marketing and different sweetener mixes could get drinkers back.

Coca-Cola Co. said it sold 4 percent less soda in North America, while PepsiCo Inc. simply said its decline for the region was in the "mid-single digits." Dr Pepper sold 3 percent less of the fizzy drinks.

Coca-Cola, based in Atlanta, blamed the sluggish sales on a cold, wet spring. But the declines continue a

years-long trend. According to the industry tracker Beverage Digest, per capita soda consumption in the U.S. has been slipping steadily since 1998 amid concerns that sugary drinks fuel weight gain.

Another problem is that people now have so many more choices when it comes to drinks. An endless array of bottled waters, teas of many colors, even energy shots and "relaxation" drinks are vying for the attention of the thirsty, with store coolers getting more crowded all the time. The trend "won't change and will probably get worse without a major breakthrough in new sweeteners," said John Sicher, editor and publisher of trade publication Beverage Digest.

PepsiCo's decline for the quarter came despite its stepped-up marketing

over the past year; the company signed Beyonce to star in its ads and signed a multiyear deal to sponsor the Super Bowl halftime show. The company also introduced a mid-calorie soda called Pepsi Next to win back people who've quit soda because they don't like the calories in regular or the taste of diet. Dr Pepper has also introduced a lineup of 10-calorie sodas, starting with Dr Pepper Ten. The idea is that they have just enough high-fructose corn syrup to taste better than diet. But the new drinks apparently aren't convincing enough people to pick up soda again.

Coke has even taken on the question of obesity head-on in TV commercials, hoping to convince people that physical activity can let them enjoy some guilt-free refreshment.

To make up for the declines in the meantime, the industry is relying on bottled waters, teas, sports drinks and other beverages to boost sales. They're also looking overseas to emerging markets, where middle-class populations are growing and there's a greater potential to sell them more drinks.

Still, the North American soda market remains crucial for Coke, Pepsi and Dr Pepper.

Their executives have steadfastly expressed optimism that a yet-to-be developed soda made with a natural, low-calorie sweetener can help turn around the soda slide.

PepsiCo has said its work on a sweetener mix could potentially "alter the trajectory of our cola business in a meaningful way." But it has yet to provide any more details. □

Ford 2Q in overdrive as US, Asia lead the way

DEE-ANN DURBIN

AP Auto Writer

DEARBORN, Michigan (AP)

— Ford Motor Co. is finally becoming the well-rounded company it aspires to be. Almost bankrupt last decade because it relied too heavily on selling big trucks and SUVs in North America, the second-largest U.S. automaker is now making small and midsize cars at a profit and selling them across the globe.

Ford's Asian operations earned a record quarterly profit of \$117 million in the three months ended June 30, and 20 percent of Ford's sales came from the region. That's up from 11 percent five years ago. Sales also grew in South



Photo shows a Ford logo on the tailgate of a pick-up truck under a Ford dealership sign at Salem Ford in Salem, N.H. Ford Motor Co. reported strong quarterly earnings on Wednesday, July 24, 2013. (AP Photo/Charles Krupa)

America, where second-quarter profit jumped to \$151 million from \$5 million a year ago. Ford even nar-

rowed its losses in recession-weary Europe.

"I call it a green shoot. We're at the beginning of

the phase where you'll start to see — over the next several years — the operations outside of North America take on a lot more significance," Ford's Chief Financial Officer Bob Shanks told media Wednesday at the company's Dearborn, Michigan, headquarters. "You're starting to see what's possible." North America still contributed the bulk of Ford's net income, which grew 18.5 percent to \$1.23 billion in the April-June period. But Shanks noted that the rest of Ford's global regions broke even for the first time in two years, clawing their way back from a \$600 million loss in the first quarter. Ford handily beat Wall

Street's earnings and revenue forecasts and raised its full-year profit guidance. The company now expects full-year pretax profit to be equal to or better than the \$8 billion it reported a year ago. Previously the company had expected to match that profit. Ford also expects sales in the U.S., Europe and China to be at the upper end of its previous forecasts. Ford's shares rose 2.5 percent to \$17.37 in afternoon trading Wednesday. Earlier, they rose to \$17.67, the highest intraday price since Jan. 28, 2011. The company's results were propelled by a \$2.3 billion profit in North America, a second-quarter record for that region. □

Boeing 2Q profit tops expectations despite 787

JOSHUA FREED

AP Business Writer

Boeing's problems with its 787 have made headlines, but they haven't hurt profits.

It posted a bigger-than-expected second-quarter profit as it ramped up deliveries of commercial planes like its 737 and its 777.

Boeing is in the midst of a boom in airplane orders as airlines in Asia and Latin America expand. It is speeding up production of

its 737 as well as the new 787, known as the Dreamliner. Deliveries of all commercial planes rose 13 percent to 169 planes during the quarter.

Deliveries of the 787 were temporarily halted in January when the plane was grounded because of battery problems. But they resumed in May and Boeing delivered 16 of the jets during the quarter. It still expects to deliver at least 60 of the 787s this year — the

same goal it had before the battery problems surfaced.

Boeing's net income rose 13 percent to \$1.09 billion, or \$1.41 per share. During the same period last year it earned \$967 million, or \$1.27 per share. Revenue rose 9 percent to \$21.82 billion.

The results include costs from pensions. On that basis, analysts surveyed by FactSet had been expecting a profit of \$1.30

per share with revenue of \$20.79 billion.

Boeing said that it has finished paying airline customers who had to stop flying their 787s because of the grounding. Boeing didn't say how much it spent, but it wasn't enough to show up in the company's financial results released Wednesday.

Fifty 787s were grounded for almost four months because of problems with their batteries. Several

airlines said they wanted compensation.

Airlines have to keep making payments on planes whether they're flying or not. The Polish government has said the grounding cost LOT Polish Airlines more than \$30 million in lost flights alone.

"There were some instances where we had obligations to customers, and those have all been satisfied," Chairman and CEO Jim McNerney said on a conference call. □

Caterpillar 2Q profit falls 43 pct; cuts outlook

TOM KRISHER

AP Business Writer

A global mining industry slump cut into second-quarter earnings at Caterpillar Inc. as companies spent less on equipment and dealers cut inventories more than Caterpillar expected.

The world's largest maker of construction and mining equipment posted a 43 percent slide in earnings and cut its profit and revenue outlook for the year. Caterpillar reported earnings of \$960 million, or \$1.45 per share, compared with \$1.7 billion, or \$2.54 per share a year ago. Revenue slid 15.8 percent to \$14.63 billion.

That was well short of Wall

Street's expectations. Analysts surveyed by FactSet had expected a profit of \$1.69 per share on revenue of \$15.09 billion.

The company said dealers cut inventories by \$1 billion as the global mining industry slowed. Growth especially slowed in China.

Shares of Caterpillar Inc. fell \$2.06, or 2.4 percent, to \$83.46 in afternoon trading.

Caterpillar also said it had currency translation and hedging losses during the quarter.

CEO Doug Oberhelman predicted improved profits during the second half of the year as the company takes further cost-cutting measures.



This photo shows a parking lot at Caterpillar Belgium, in Gosselies, Belgium. Caterpillar Inc. reported concerning quarterly financial results before the market opened on Wednesday, July 24, 2013. (AP Photo/Yves Logghe)

Caterpillar still cut its full-year profit outlook from about \$7 per share to \$6.50. And revenue is now expected to come in between \$56 billion and \$58

billion, down from previous guidance of \$57 billion to \$61 billion.

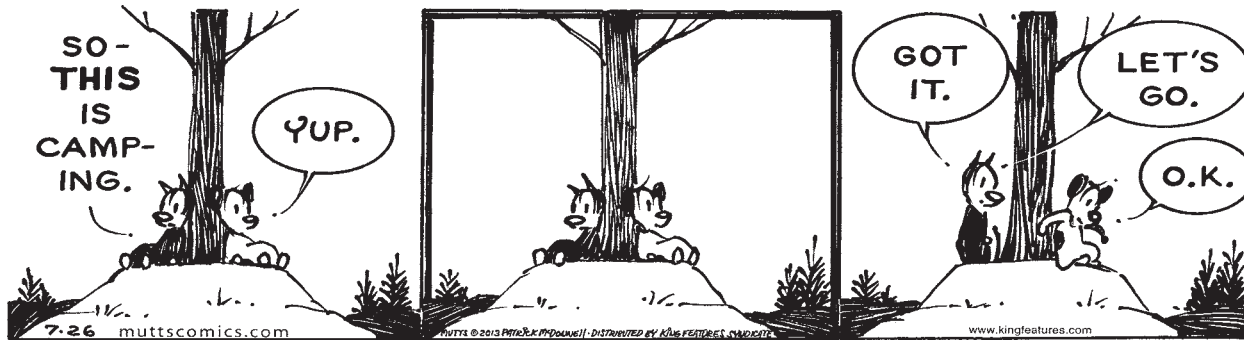
Dealers, Oberhelman said, used inventory from Caterpillar's product distribution

during the quarter rather than stocking their own businesses. Company inventory also dropped by \$1.2 billion.

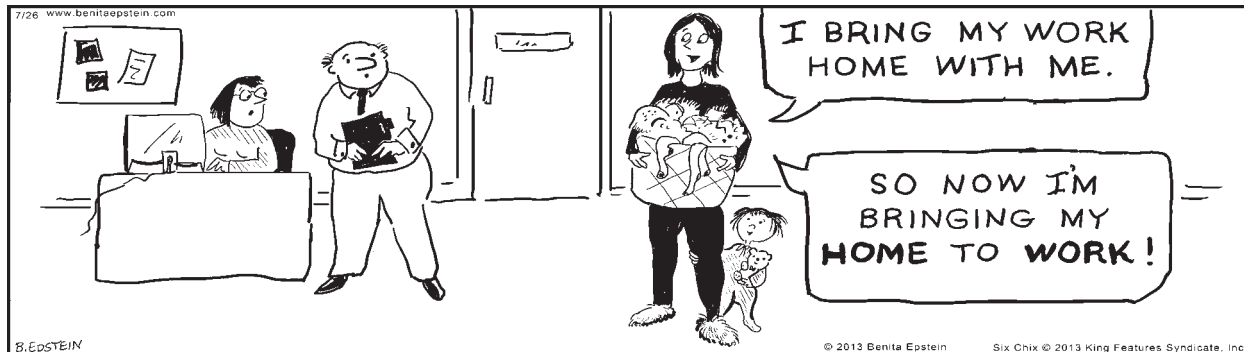
Dealers are positioned to cut inventory even further, and the company expects it to fall by \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion in the second half, Oberhelman said.

"That means we are underselling end-user demand this year, and it sets us up for better sales in 2014," he said. Caterpillar, which has seen its share price decline 7 percent this year, repurchased \$1 billion worth of stock in the second quarter, and based on strong cash flow, it expects to buy another \$1 billion worth in the third quarter. □

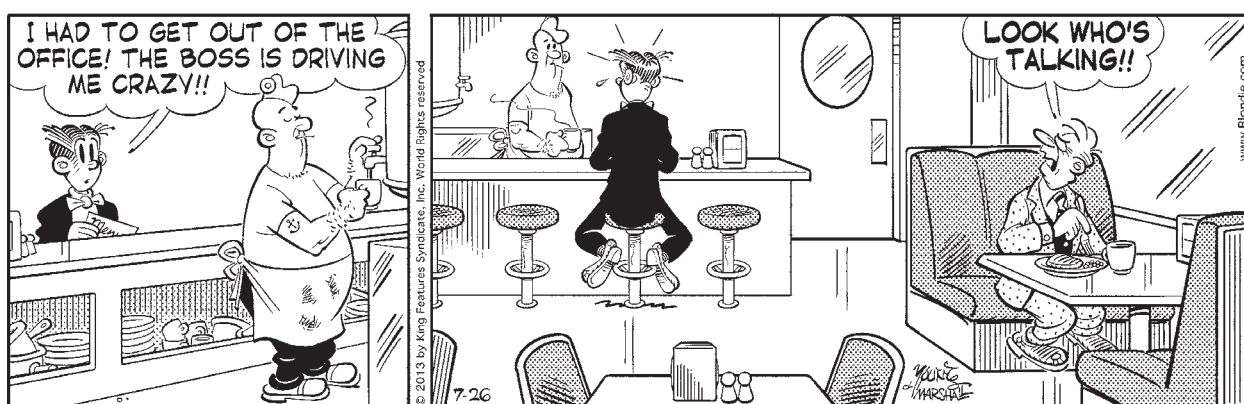
Mutts



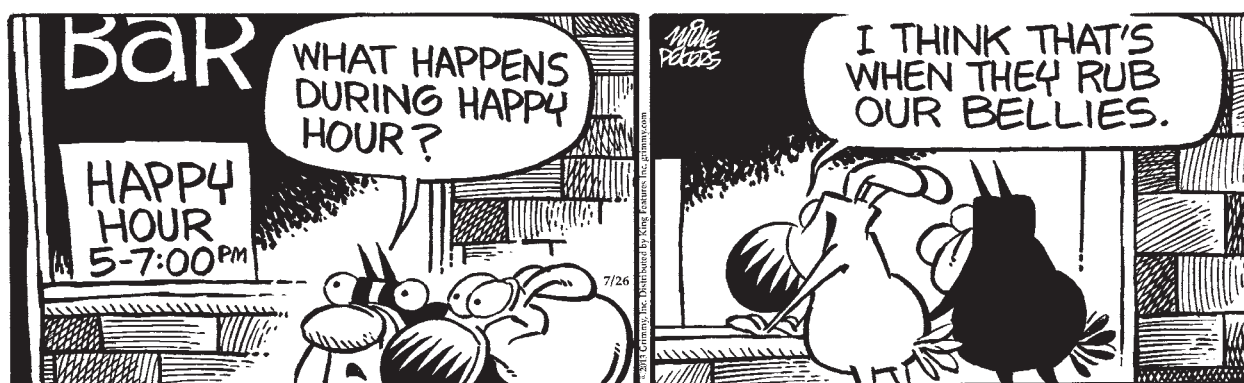
6 Chix



Blondie



Mother Goose & Grimm



Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

		1	7			4	6	
6					9			
	2						1	5
5								
		7	3		6	9		
								8
8	4						3	
			8					2
	7	3			5	8		

Difficulty Level ★★★★★

7/26

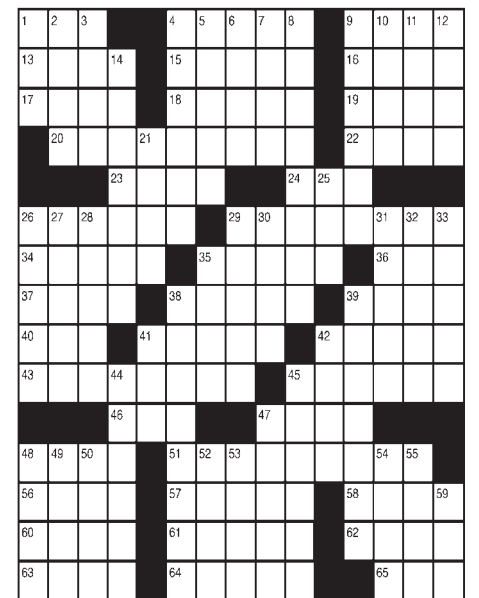
Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Yesterday's puzzle answer

3	2	9	6	1	7	4	5	8
8	7	5	4	3	9	2	6	1
4	1	6	2	5	8	3	7	9
6	8	4	9	7	5	1	3	2
9	3	2	1	4	6	5	8	7
7	5	1	3	8	2	6	9	4
5	9	3	7	2	4	8	1	6
1	4	7	8	6	3	9	2	5
2	6	8	5	9	1	7	4	3

ACROSS

- 1 Begley & Asner
- 4 Play a guitar
- 9 Ditch around a castle
- 13 Rich soil
- 15 Button on a DVD remote
- 16 Take apart
- 17 Restaurant's list of offerings
- 18 Carousels and Ferris wheels
- 19 Male deer
- 20 Ridiculous
- 22 Singer Perry
- 23 Membership fees
- 24 Tax-deferred retirement acct.
- 26 TV's "The ___ Family"; series for John Astin
- 29 "...not a ___ was stirring, not even a mouse..."
- 34 Actor Jeremy
- 35 Bread ingredient
- 36 Woodwind instrument, for short
- 37 Thin coin
- 38 Review of the financial books
- 39 Witty comment
- 40 12/24 or 12/31
- 41 Woody or Mel
- 42 Handbag
- 43 Abandoned
- 45 Drive forward
- 46 Highest card
- 47 Owl's cry
- 48 It was, to a poet
- 51 Saying in a different way
- 56 Cartoon bear
- 57 Chris of tennis
- 58 Shipshape
- 60 Swimming spot
- 61 Honking birds
- 62 Violent wind
- 63 Nervous
- 64 Command
- 65 Hightailed it



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

7/26/13

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

DOWN

- 1 Lawn tree
- 2 ___ wonders for; improves much
- 3 Of sound mind
- 4 Unrestrained binges
- 5 Coin toss call
- 6 Impolite
- 7 ___ up; spends
- 8 Most cluttered
- 9 Oman's capital
- 10 Climb ___; mount
- 11 Man in Eden
- 12 African nation
- 14 Very ordinary
- 21 Totals
- 25 Mouse's cousin
- 26 Helped
- 27 Operate a car
- 28 Capitol roofs, often
- 29 Relinquished
- 30 Wet weather forecast
- 31 Seize power
- 32 Elevate
- 33 Force out

HERB	ADORE	DOSE
IDEA	SOBER	AGES
VEAL	SNIBE	WRAP
ENRAGES	ACADEMY	
	NUT	VITAL
EDICT	DID	REACH
MINE	BEN	CORNEA
BAT	AUCTION	DAB
ENERGY	ADO	DESI
RARER	AGO	RESET
	WEAVE	MAC
BELIEVE	PEGASUS	
EVER	ORALS	GONE
DIVE	ISLES	OMIT
SLID	DELAY	NETS

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7/26/13

- 35 Christmas
- 38 Second self
- 39 Repeating the words of
- 41 St. Joan of ___
- 42 Nudge
- 44 Without a hitch
- 45 Composer Cole
- 47 Mare or stallion
- 48 Sort; variety
- 49 Teak or pine
- 50 Very eager
- 52 At any time
- 53 Garden intruder
- 54 Within reach
- 55 Celebration
- 59 1 + 2 + 3 + 4

For men, a gluteus more maximus

ANDREW ADAM NEWMAN
© 2013 New York Times

Not long ago, Jeff Vickers, who owns a construction company, had surgery to address something that had, fittingly, been the butt of jokes. "I'd wear jogging pants to work and the guys used to joke that, 'You could drop a plumb bob from the back of your head and the string wouldn't hit anything

faces and hands, while gaining it in stomachs and chests, Mendieta said. Weight lifting yields only modest results for the posterior.

"The only way to pump up your derriere," he said, "is with your wallet."

According to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, men accounted for 6.2 percent of cosmetic buttock proce-

bra and the phenomenal sales they were having," Olvera said. "And the light bulb went off and I thought, 'If women have enhancement products, why don't men?'"

The Go Softwear Super Padded Brief (\$37.50) has 5-by-7-inch oval pads quilted into them that could pass for potholders. It is hard to imagine how a romantic interest would react to first encountering them.

"Women have been wearing padded bras for years, and they get into romantic situations and some are self-conscious and some probably just don't care," Olvera said. "But there's still more of a stigma for men than for women."

Bonobos, a men's e-commerce company, began in 2007 with a stated mission of ending "khaki diaper butt" with better-fitting pants. Atypical of menswear brands, Bonobos has emphasized that women ogle men's haunches; a 2009 advertisement declared, "Here's your chance to tell women, 'Hey, my eyes are up here.'" When it asked its Facebook followers for reactions to its pants, Lori Feinman wrote of an unfamiliar woman in a bar who walked up to Feinman's Bonobos-clad husband "and grabbed his butt with both hands and said, 'I love these pants.'" And that, Feinman concluded, "effectively ended his midlife crisis." A recent Men's Health article suggested that men "who don't have a contoured bumper" try jeans with pocket flaps. "It adds more shapeliness if you lack junk in the trunk," Peter Moore, the editor of the magazine, said in an interview. "The pockets can add visual definition back there and give wandering female eyes something to look at." □



Jeff Vickers, who had fat from his abdomen injected into his buttocks to make them less flat and to help him keep his pants up, in Radford, Va., April 21, 2013. Popularity of cosmetic buttock procedures for men is in the rise.

(Kyle Green/The New York Times)

before it hit the ground," he said, referring to the weight on a string used for surveying.

Vickers, 46, who lives in Radford, Va., and is married with four children, cannot remember when it was otherwise.

"I've always had a nonexistent butt," he said. "Zero." Last fall, he had his first consultation with Dr. Constantino G. Mendieta, the author of "The Art of Gluteal Sculpting" and a cosmetic surgeon in Miami.

"When I went in to the doctor, I said, 'I'm not a girl so I'm not worried about having a table back there you could sit a coffee cup on,'" Vickers said. "I just wanted to be able to put on a pair of pants and for them to stay up."

Mendieta performed liposuction on Vickers' abdomen and love handles, then injected the fat into the buttocks.

"They take the fat where you don't want it, and put it where you do want it," Vickers said.

As men age, they tend to lose fat from their buttocks,

dures in 2012, up from 2.2 percent in 1997.

At Freshpair, an online store, buttocks-enhancing underwear accounts for more than 6 percent of men's underwear sales, up from less than 1 percent five years ago, according to Matthew Butlein, the president of the company. "With the trend going toward slimmer pants, you're able to see the assets underneath a lot better," Butlein said.

In the Calvin Klein Body Boost Butt Trunk (\$22), support straps inconspicuously woven into the fabric of the boxer briefs lift and support. Elastic undergirdings in the 2(x)ist Lift No Show Brief (\$24) also give hindquarters a boost.

Go Softwear introduced the first line of men's underwear with enhancement padding in the seat in 1996, said the company founder, Greg Olvera, who came up with the idea in a marketing class at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif.

"Someone in the class was talking about the Wonder-

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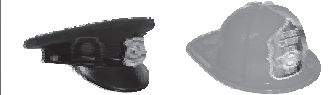
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Experts: Gas in Gulf blowout is less damaging

J. MCCONNAUGHEY

KEVIN MCGILL

Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — A blown-out natural gas well blazing off Louisiana's coast poses fewer environmental dangers than past offshore accidents because it appears to primarily involve gas that disperses relatively easily, scientists said Wednesday.

"A gas well's not going to result in any kind of major pollution — perhaps not even significant pollution if it's burning," said Ted Bourgoyne, the former chair of Louisiana State University's petroleum engineering department. He now runs the consultancy Bourgoyne Enterprises Inc.

Federal inspectors saw no sheens near the well during flyovers Wednesday morning, which indicates the gas is burning off without releasing oil or other hydrocarbons — which are sometimes found in gas wells — into the water. While it's not clear if the well in Tuesday's blowout contained any crude oil, officials and scientists agree that the latest mishap shouldn't be nearly as damaging as the BP oil spill that famously sent crude oil oozing ashore in 2010. The fire broke out late Tuesday hours after the blowout, authorities said. Forty-four workers were evacuated from a drilling rig at the site, and no injuries were reported.

University of Georgia marine scientist Samantha "Mandy" Joye also said the pollution and health dangers posed by a gas well are quite different than those posed at the well where the Deepwater Horizon rig blew up in 2010, killing 11 people and spewing millions of gallons (liters)



A fire is seen on the Hercules 265 drilling rig in the Gulf of Mexico off the coast of Louisiana, Wednesday, July 24, 2013. Natural gas spewed uncontrolled from the well on Tuesday after a blowout that forced the evacuation of 44 workers aboard the drilling rig, authorities said. No injuries were reported in the blowout.

Associated Press

of oil for weeks.

"The biggest danger from gas is that it is extremely

flammable. At high concentration, gas exposure can cause health issues

(vomiting, headaches, and worse) but such high levels are not likely to be reached in warm, shallow waters," Joye said in an email response to questions.

That's not to say there were no dangers. The Coast Guard maintained traffic restrictions within 500 meters of the site and the Federal Aviation Administration restricted aircraft up to 2,000 feet (610 meters) over the area.

Tuesday's blowout occurred at a drilling rig adjacent to a natural gas platform that wasn't producing gas at the time. The rig was completing a "sidetrack well," which drills into the same well hole under the platform. Industry experts say such wells are used to remedy an obstruction or other problem with the original bore, or to access a different part of the gas reserve.

Gas spewed throughout the day and ignited late Tuesday night. The cause of the blowout was under investigation being over-

seen by the federal Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement.

Rig owner Hercules Offshore Inc. said the plan to stop the flow of gas may include drilling a relief well to divert the gas from the accident site, which could take weeks.

"We are singularly focused on coming up with an action plan that would regain control over the well," said James Noe, an executive with Hercules, which was operating the rig for Walters Oil & Gas, an exploration and production company.

Natural gas — mostly methane — is far more soluble than oil, meaning it more easily dissolves, dilutes and disperses than crude oil, said Donald Boesch, president of the University of Maryland's Center for Environmental Science and a member of the federal panel that investigated the BP oil spill. That means concentrations would be far less lethal to the marine environment, he said. □

Space art eyes creativity in tech at Smithsonian

Brett Zongker

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The familiar exteriors of astronauts' spacesuits often hide all of the ingenuity and mechanics that are built inside the suits, which were first imagined as "wearable spacecraft."

Now a new art exhibit, "Suited for Space," opening Friday at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum, highlights the creativity behind the suits that allowed humans to explore the moon and aspire to fly farther from Earth.

X-ray images and photographs show the suits in intricate detail, said space history curator Cathleen Lewis. The museum's X-rays are the first such images ever created to study, conserve and research the nation's spacesuits.

"You don't realize what a complex machine these are," Lewis said. But the X-rays of Alan Shepard's Apollo spacesuit and a 1960s prototype "allow visitors to see beyond what is visible to the naked eye, through the protective layers of the suit to see the substructures that are embedded inside."

The exhibition traces the evolution of the spacesuit from the early high-altitude test flight suits of the 1930s to the dawn of the space age with Mercury, Gemini, Apollo and space shuttle missions.

While technology drove much of the suit design to maintain an airtight barrier to the vacuum of space

and to protect from solar radiation, fashion aesthetics of the time also played a role, Lewis said. The original Mercury seven astronaut suits were unique from all others with a silvery coating to introduce America's space explorers to the world.

"NASA had a demand to create the astronauts into a whole new corps, a non-military corps. So here was an opportunity to dress them in a new uniform ... that evokes sensibilities of that Buck Rogers imagination," she said. "All of these guys, the engineers, they grew up on science fiction. They fed it with their ideas, and they were consumers of it at the same time."

Curators are working to find ways to preserve spacesuits because some materials are decomposing, discoloring or becoming rigid some 50 years after they were created.

The spacesuit show is traveling to 10 cities, moving next

to Tampa, Fla., Philadelphia and Seattle through 2015.

Two companion exhibits at the National Air and Space Museum also highlight 50 artworks of about 550 new items added to the Smithsonian's growing space art collection over the past decade. The museum's art collection includes 7,000 paintings, drawings, prints, posters and sculptures. Curators have been working to add more contemporary and conceptual art over the past 10 years. Chief Curator Peter Jakab said art helps people reflect on aerospace achievements and the humanity imbued in each machine.

Albert Watson, a photographer known for his portraits of celebrities, such as Steve Jobs, and of fashion, took a break in 1990 to photograph spacesuits and other artifacts.

More recently, he donated two large-scale prints of an Apollo glove and boot to the museum. □

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A new daughter makes Jimmy Fallon a first-time dad

NEW YORK (AP) — “Late Night” host Jimmy Fallon can expect some late nights at home as a proud new papa.

A representative says Fallon and his wife, Nancy Juvonen Fallon, welcomed a baby daughter Tuesday morning.

The publicist says the first-time parents are “overjoyed.”

He and his film-producer wife were wed in 2007.

The 38-year-old Fallon takes over NBC’s “The Tonight Show” from Jay Leno next year after hosting “Late Night” since 2009. □



In this April 23, 2013 file photo shows talk show host Jimmy Fallon and his wife Nancy Juvonen at the TIME 100 Gala celebrating the “100 Most Influential People in the World” at Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York.

Associated Press

Natalie Portman to direct first film in Jerusalem

DANIEL ESTRIN
Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli film officials say Israeli-American actress Natalie Portman will direct her first feature film, based on an autobiographical novel by celebrated Israeli writer

Amos Oz.

Yoram Honig of the Jerusalem Film Fund and a publicist for the film said Wednesday that Portman wrote the screenplay and will also star in the movie as Oz’s troubled mother.

They say Portman is to arrive in Israel in October to cast local actors. The movie will be filmed in Jerusalem in early 2014.

It’s not decided if the film will be shot in Hebrew or English. Honig’s fund is providing \$400,000.

The movie is based on Oz’s 2002 autobiography, “A Tale of Love and Darkness,” about his youth during Israel’s founding years.

The publicist spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the project. □



In this Feb. 24, 2013 file photo, actress Natalie Portman arrives at the 2013 Vanity Fair Oscars Viewing and After Party in West Hollywood, Calif.

Associated Press



In this publicity image released by Warner Bros. Pictures, Vera Farmiga portrays Lorraine Warren in a scene from “The Conjuring.”

Associated Press

Analysis: A volatile summer for Hollywood

JAKE COYLE

AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — On and off screen, it’s been a bruising summer for Hollywood. Every weekend, the multiplex has been under siege like it has rarely been before. One after another, they have come: Big-budget, globe-trotting blockbusters backed, like goliaths with air support, by marketing budgets in the hundreds of millions.

As the studios have focused increasingly on the fortunes of monster-sized “tentpoles,” as they’re known in the trade, weekend real-estate in the summer months has become precious, fraught territory. In the season’s packed schedule, there’s little breathing room for the blockbusters: They need to open big, right away.

Some of these films have succeeded. Some have flopped. But more than most summers, the content of this year’s seasonal crop of spectacles has felt like a pummeling, leaving both moviegoers and some in the industry dazed from the onslaught.

Zombies swarmed over much of the planet in “World War Z.” Sea monsters rose from the ocean and battled giant robots in “Pacific Rim.” Superman’s

Metropolis was haphazardly laid to rubble in “Man of Steel.” For the third time, Roland Emmerich destroyed 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in “White House Down.” A fiery Rapture engulfed “This Is the End.” Studio balance sheets have been hardly less volatile.

The latest bomb came over the weekend with “R.I.P.D.,” in which Jeff Bridges and Ryan Reynolds star as ghost cops. The poorly reviewed Universal film opened with just \$12.7 million, suggesting it won’t come close to recouping its \$130 million-plus price tag. The failure was all the more pronounced because of the robust opening (\$41.5 million) for Warner Bros.’ “The Conjuring,” an old-fashioned horror film made for under \$20 million. It’s become a recurring theme of summer 2013: Non-sequel, big-budget films have struggled to find audiences. Most striking was Gore Verbinski’s “The Lone Ranger,” which Disney had hoped would ignite the same interest as the “Pirates of the Caribbean” series that also teamed Verbinski with Johnny Depp.

But although “The Lone Ranger” was an admirable attempt to update the

Western, the film’s imbalanced tone fell extremely flat with moviegoers. Made for some \$215 million, it has earned \$81.3 million domestically in three weeks. Also underperforming, to the tune of tens of millions of dollars, has been:

— “White House Down” (\$68.5 million domestically in four weeks, despite its silly popcorn fun and Channing Tatum’s rising star).

— “After Earth” (\$60 million domestically in eight weeks, despite Will Smith’s steady history as a box-office draw).

— Guillermo del Toro’s “Pacific Rim” (\$68.2 million domestic, despite its well-crafted pop sensibility). Launched with franchise aspirations, “Pacific Rim” may end up in a better situation, since it has quickly made \$110.3 million overseas. So what IS working? Many of Hollywood’s classic genre standbys:

— Low-budget horror (“The Conjuring,” “The Purge”).

— Animated family films (“Monsters University,” “Despicable Me 2”).

— Some A-list star vehicles (Robert Downey Jr. in “Iron Man 3,” Brad Pitt in “World War Z,” Sandra Bullock and Melissa McCarthy in “The Heat”).

Continued on next page

Munn thinks love for Wonder Woman won't win role



In this July 7, 2010 file photo, Olivia Munn signs copies of her book "Suck It, Wonder Woman" at Borders in New York.

Associated Press

HEATHER TAN

Associated Press

SINGAPORE (AP) — Olivia Munn's love for Wonder Woman may be no secret, but the actress doesn't think she'd be likely to play the superheroine on the big screen.

The Chinese-American

Munn says she likely wouldn't be considered due to her heritage as well as competition from bigger-name actresses.

"It would be great, though, if the producers could make Wonder Woman an Asian-American, but that's probably not what they

would do," Munn said. "I don't know a lot of Asian-American women who are getting great opportunities yet, and the other actresses (vying for the role) are probably really famous and Hollywood tends to go for the girls who are already in the big movies."

Munn has a fierce following among comic book fans thanks to her love for "geek culture" and regular appearances at San Diego's Comic-Con. The 33-year-old actress born in Oklahoma also has appeared in "Iron Man 2" and "Magic Mike."

While she gushed about feeling "strong and invincible" dressed up as Wonder Woman, she admitted discomfort in the costume, too. "I dressed up as Wonder Woman one year and that was my last; it's not comfortable to dress up in front of all those people," Munn said. "Costumes for superheroes; man or woman, are always very skimpy, so it's not something that you want to wear with a lot

of people around you."

"But I love Wonder Woman as much as I love Batman but obviously a little bit more because she's such a strong female figure and there aren't that many strong female superheroes out there," she gushed.

She also carefully explained that the title of her book, "Suck it, Wonder Woman! The Misadventures of a Hollywood Geek," was not her idea, but rather an editor's inspiration. "I did not want to name it that, and I actually did not agree with it because I love Wonder Woman," Munn said. She continued, admitting "it worked out well because the name was so silly that it became memorable and helped my book sell so I stopped complaining about the name."

The self-professed "vigilante superhero" broke into a smile when told about fans wanting her to play Wonder Woman in an anticipated "Justice League" movie. Warner Bros. hasn't confirmed reports that a

film was being slated for 2017 in which a medley of DC Comics superheroes — including Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman — come together to fight crime. Munn was in Singapore on Tuesday to promote the season premiere of the HBO series "The Newsroom," where she plays financial journalist Sloan Sabbith.

She said she always dreamed of being an actress but that Hollywood dreams were not encouraged in her traditional Asian family, where her older sister practices law and her brother is an engineer. "I was never encouraged to go into acting, so I majored in journalism as I love telling stories, and I love doing it but the moment I had the opportunity to pursue acting, I took it," she said.

"Playing Sloan is really nice because in some way, my mom feels I am making good use of my journalism degree," she added with a laugh. □

HOLLYWOOD

Continued from page 29

Of course, Reynolds, Smith and Tatum would be the exceptions here.

But when Hollywood puts its eggs in fewer baskets, the risks — along with the rewards — grow. In June, even Steven Spielberg, the father of the modern blockbuster, bemoaned the business' swelling trajectory.

"There's going to be an implosion where three or four or maybe even a half-dozen mega-budget movies are going to go crashing into the ground, and that's going to change the paradigm," Spielberg said at an industry gathering.

His comments reverberated because of their source: If even Spielberg is giving up, what hope does anyone else have?

Certainly, Hollywood — a perpetually fickle industry built on the rare megahits — has often been a victim to over-the-top "the-sky-



This film publicity image released by Universal Pictures shows Jeff Bridges, left, and Ryan Reynolds in a scene from "R.I.P.D."

Associated Press

is-falling" worries. The box office to date is, after all, up 12 percent from last year. This year's movies followed one of the more robust Oscar seasons in years, one that saw a slate of both lucrative and acclaimed best-picture nominees that together totaled more than \$1 billion in box office.

But the movies are undergoing yet another period of transformation. With the increasing appeal of cable and digital enter-

tainment, and the bottoming-out of the home video market, Hollywood has tried to lure moviegoers with bigger (and more expensive) 3-D extravaganzas.

As usual, there's rebellion in the works from filmmakers who feel marginalized by the studios' shrinking purview. Spike Lee on Monday announced that he would seek financing for his next feature film through the online crowd-sourcing site Kickstarter.

"Super Heroes, Comic Books, 3-D Special EFX, Blowing up the Planet Nine Times and Fly through the Air while Transforming is not my Thang," wrote Lee on his film page, where he's asking for \$1.5 million. "To me it's not just that these Films are being made but it seems like these are the only films getting made."

Some filmmakers, most notably Steven Soderbergh, have fled to cable television, a medium that in some cases offers more creative freedom. Soderbergh earlier this year released his \$23 million Liberace biopic, "Behind the Candelabra," on HBO. He has quit Hollywood for now and is prepping the 10-episode series "The Knick," starring Clive Owen, for Cinemax.

Yet, there's plenty for Hollywood to be proud of right now. The summer's smaller counter-programming has included Ryan Coogler's devastating debut, "Fruitvale Station"; Richard Linklater's serial romance "Before

Midnight"; an acclaimed rendition of Shakespeare from Joss Whedon ("Much Ado About Nothing"); and possibly the best Woody Allen film in a decade ("Blue Jasmine").

The summer isn't over yet. If audiences have any stamina left, there are several big action films coming before Labor Day, including Hugh Jackman's "X-Men" spinoff "The Wolverine"; the cop thriller "2 Guns," with Denzel Washington and Mark Wahlberg; and Neill Blomkamp's sci-fi epic "Elysium." Blomkamp, whose latest film cost \$115 million to make, broke out with the \$34-million sci-fi smash "District 9."

That and the recent success of "The Conjuring," "Monsters University" and "The Heat" show that sometimes a movie doesn't need to cost \$200 million-plus, run 2 ½ hours or put the fate of the world in peril. Thankfully, human-sized tales with a little wit or a bit of fright still get the job done. □

The Texas Abortion Experiment



ROSS DOUTHAT
© 2013 New York Times

What happens to a modern society when abortion is restricted? This question is at the heart of the debate over Texas' new abortion law, which bans abortions after 20 weeks and issues health regulations that could thin the ranks of state abortion clinics, making even first-trimester abortions harder to obtain. The law's actual impact may be less sweeping than critics argue. But suppose for the sake of argument that they're right and that the legislation will dramatically curtail legal abortion. Then further suppose that it somehow survives the inevitable court challenge. What consequences are likely to ensue?

One possible answer is that Texas will make a forced march into squalor, misery and patriarchal oppression. Women's lives will be endangered, their health threatened, their economic opportunities substantially foreclosed.

To the extent that this case rests on facts rather than fear, it's based on cross-country comparisons. Around the globe, countries with abortion bans often do have worse outcomes - more poverty, fewer opportunities for women and, yes, often more abortions as well.

But there's a problem with these comparisons: They don't compare like to like, or control for the host of variables that separate, say, sub-Saharan Africa from the United States and Europe. They tell us that underdeveloped countries are more likely to ban abortion, but they don't tell us whether those bans actually hold back progress and development.

To prove that case, you would need to look at how abortion restrictions play out in a wealthy, liberal and egalitarian society. Here two examples are instructive: Europe in general and Ireland in particular.

In the first case, many European countries have versions of Texas' late-term abortion ban on the books. France, Germany and Italy all ban abortions after the first trimester, and impose waiting periods as well.

Notably, these nations tend to have lower abortion rates than the United States, and none of them are exactly reactionary dystopias in the style of Margaret Atwood's "Handmaid's Tale." So the European experience suggests that at least some abortion restrictions are compatible with equality and female advancement.

Then there is the specific case of Ireland, which has maintained a near-absolute abortion ban

throughout its history. This ban does not mean that no Irish women obtain legal abortions: Some go abroad for them, to Britain or Continental Europe. But that actually makes the comparison to Texas more apt - because even if abortion were somehow banned outright in Texas tomorrow, it would still be available to women with the resources to travel out of state.

So if liberal fears about the Texas legislation's impact are correct, one would expect the Irish ban to have produced obvious, disastrous side effects. At the very least, one would expect Ireland to lag in female mortality, health and economic advancement.

Maternal health is indeed a fraught topic in Ireland. The abortion debate there has mostly revolved around how to interpret the "life of the mother" exception, and the high-profile case of Savita Halappanavar, an Indian immigrant who died unnecessarily during a miscarriage, recently prompted the Irish Parliament to widen that exception. But there is little evidence that the Halappanavar tragedy reflects a larger trend. Ireland's maternal health outcomes have long looked much better than those of its neighbors, and even a recent report that produced a higher estimate for maternal mortality still placed the country well within the European norm. Meanwhile, international rankings offer few indications that Ireland's abortion laws are holding Irish women back. The country ranks first for gender parity in health care in a recent European Union index. It was in the middle of the pack in the Economist's recent "glass-ceiling index" for working women. It came in fifth out of 135 countries in the World Economic Forum's "Global Gender Gap" report. (The United States was 22nd.)

Now it's also true that Ireland, like most of Europe, is to the left of Texas on many economic issues. All the abortion restrictions described above coexist with universal health care, which Rick Perry's state conspicuously lacks. So perhaps, it might be argued, abortion can be safely limited only when the government does more to cover women's costs in other ways - in which case Texas might still be flirting with disaster. But note that this is a better argument for liberalism than for abortion.

It suggests, for instance, that liberal donors and activists should be spending more time rallying against Perry's refusal to take federal Medicaid financing than around Wendy Davis' famous filibuster.

It implies that the quest to "turn Texas blue" should make economic policy rather than late-term abortion its defining issue. And it raises the possibility that a pro-life liberalism - that once-commonplace, now-mythical persuasion - would actually have a stronger argument to make than the one Texas' critics are making now. □



Detroit, The New Greece



PAUL KRUGMAN
© 2013 New York Times

When Detroit declared bankruptcy, or at least tried to - the legal situation has gotten complicated - I know that I wasn't the only economist to have a sinking feeling about the likely impact on our policy discourse. Was it going to be Greece all over again?

Clearly, some people would like to see that happen. So let's get this conversation headed in the right direction, before it's too late. OK, what am I talking about? As you may recall, a few years ago Greece plunged into fiscal crisis. This was a bad thing but should have had limited effects on the rest of the world; the Greek economy is, after all, quite small (actually, about 1 1/2 times as big as the economy of metropolitan Detroit). Unfortunately, many politicians and policymakers used the Greek crisis to hijack the debate, changing the subject from job creation to fiscal rectitude.

Now, the truth was that Greece was a very special case, holding few if any lessons for wider economic policy - and even in Greece, budget deficits were only one piece of the problem. Nonetheless, for a while policy discourse across the Western world was completely "Hellenized" - everyone was Greece, or was about to turn into Greece. And this intellectual wrong turn did huge damage to prospects

for economic recovery.

So now the deficit scolds have a new case to misinterpret. Never mind the repeated failure of the predicted U.S. fiscal crisis to materialize, the sharp fall in predicted U.S. debt levels and the way much of the research the scolds used to justify their scolding has been discredited; let's obsess about municipal budgets and public pension obligations!

Or, actually, let's not.

Are Detroit's woes the leading edge of a national public pensions crisis? No. State and local pensions are indeed underfunded, with experts at Boston College putting the total shortfall at \$1 trillion. But many governments are taking steps to address the shortfall. These steps aren't yet sufficient; the Boston College estimates suggest that overall pension contributions this year will be about \$25 billion less than they should be. But in a \$16 trillion economy, that's just not a big deal - and even if you make more pessimistic assumptions, as some but not all accountants say you should, it still isn't a big deal. So was Detroit just uniquely irresponsible? Again, no. Detroit does seem to have had especially bad governance, but for the most part the city was just an innocent victim of market forces. What? Market forces have victims? Of course they do. After all, free-market enthusiasts love to quote Joseph Schumpeter about the inevitability of "creative destruction" - but they and their audiences invariably picture themselves as being the creative destroyers, not the creatively destroyed. Well, guess what: Someone always ends up being the modern equivalent of a buggy-whip producer, and it might be you.

Sometimes the losers from economic change are individuals whose skills have become redundant; sometimes they're companies, serving a market niche

that no longer exists; and sometimes they're whole cities that lose their place in the economic ecosystem. Decline happens. True, in Detroit's case matters seem to have been made worse by political and social dysfunction. One consequence of this dysfunction has been a severe case of "job sprawl" within the metropolitan area, with jobs fleeing the urban core even when employment in greater Detroit was still rising, and even as other cities were seeing something of a city-center revival. Fewer than a quarter of the jobs on offer in the Detroit metropolitan area lie within 10 miles of the traditional central business district; in greater Pittsburgh, another former industrial giant whose glory days have passed, the corresponding figure is more than 50 percent. And the relative vitality of Pittsburgh's core may explain why the former steel capital is showing signs of a renaissance, while Detroit just keeps sinking.

So by all means let's have a serious discussion about how cities can best manage the transition when their traditional sources of competitive advantage go away. And let's also have a serious discussion about our obligations, as a nation, to those of our fellow citizens who have the bad luck of finding themselves living and working in the wrong place at the wrong time - because, as I said, decline happens, and some regional economies will end up shrinking, perhaps drastically, no matter what we do.

The important thing is not to let the discussion get hijacked, Greek-style. There are influential people out there who would like you to believe that Detroit's demise is fundamentally a tale of fiscal irresponsibility and/or greedy public employees. It isn't. For the most part, it's just one of those things that happens now and then in an ever-changing economy. □

For Three Nights Only, A Legend Lives Again



Chef Georges Perrier, center, speaks to diners at Vetri in New York, July 19, 2013. For three nights, Perrier recreated dishes he once served at Le Bec-Fin in the building that once housed the legendary restaurant, now home to Vetri.

(Jessica Kourkounis/The New York Times)

FRANK BRUNI

© 2013 New York Times

PHILADELPHIA - There's harp music. From an honest-to-goodness harp, just inside the entrance. The kind of thing you associate with heaven, if you're inclined to such archetypes. Not what you expect in a restaurant these days. You also don't expect waiters in tuxedos and entrees with gleaming silver domes over them and escargots in pools of butter so deep that Michael Bloomberg might itch to outlaw them, so garlicky they could neutralize all of Transylvania. Here comes the chef, his toque covering half the distance to the ceiling, his manner so lavishly courteous it flirts with burlesque. He himself flirts with the women in the dining room, telling them how ravishing they look, kissing their outstretched hands, assuring the men beside them that the foie gras and the smoked salmon and the black truffles on the menu are aphrodisiacs. The evening's real dessert, he implies with a wink, will be savored later, after the check.

His name is Georges Perrier, and this isn't his place, but

then again it is. I'll explain. He and those of us who have come to pay tribute to him are at Vetri, one of the most celebrated Italian restaurants on the East Coast, named for its chef and principal owner, Marc Vetri. But for three nights, ending with the one I showed up for on Saturday, Vetri was turned into Le Bec-Fin, a Gallic empress that closed last month.

Perrier opened Le Bec-Fin in 1970 and presided over it for more than four heady decades, a titan of the Philadelphia dining scene and a legend well beyond it. He was classic French cuisine personified, at least in America. The gold standard. The grand homme. And for Le Bec-Fin's first 13 years, before he moved it to larger, more regal digs just six or so blocks away, it occupied the brick town house that is now Vetri. That's what gave Vetri the idea of briefly recreating Le Bec-Fin in its childhood and arguably its prime, so that food lovers who hadn't been quite ready to bid adieu to it, himself included, could revel in its onetime glory as a way of saying a fitting farewell.

This took planning. This took preparation. In addition to the formal wear for the staff and the harp player for the vestibule, there was the matter of the sign: Vetri wanted to hang Le Bec-Fin's original wood one out front. No one could find it. So he had a replica made. He recreated the bygone menus, with their florid typography and French-only

rebirth, how many days prior he'd had to start on stocks for the reductions. "Weeks!" Vetri yelled, correcting me. "Weeks!" He recounted the roasting of many bones, the tending of many pots. "It's all this stuff you learn back in culinary school but doesn't get used much anymore," he said. Waiters practiced not only



A crab galette is served at Vetri restaurant in New York, July 19, 2013.

(Jessica Kourkounis/The New York Times)

lexicon. He hunted down the right wines and the right trays and the domes, more properly known as cloches, and he went through a great deal of silver polish.

I asked him, during a phone conversation just before the first night of Le Bec-Fin's

balletic movements and gestures but correct pronunciation.

"We've been sitting around repeating 'oeuf au caviar,' 'oeuf au caviar,'" said Bobby Domenick, a sommelier and captain at Vetri, referring to one of the three amuse-bouches,

an egg with caviar. He added that Perrier had linguistically tutored them, a Henry Higgins of haute cuisine.

Perrier teamed with Vetri in the kitchen, and they produced a seven-course tasting menu that wasn't just a distillation of the best of Le Bec-Fin but a valentine to a lost civilization, the one where Lutèce, La Caravelle and La Côte Basque in Manhattan once flourished. And what a valentine. From the caviar and the escargots, my dining companion and I proceed to sautéed sweetbreads, a crab galette, a fillet of beef and more, some of it with sauces so rich and intense they're druggy.

I can't imagine I'll eat anything sweet after all of that, but I do: a Grand Marnier soufflé; opera cake with gold leaf glittering atop it; baba au rhum; macarons. Can't forget the macarons. It's sumptuous (heavenly, you might say) and it's so much more than a meal. It's part anthropology seminar, part costume drama. I can't shake the feeling that I and the gastronomes around me are conducting a culinary analogue to a Civil War re-enactment, wielding mother-of-pearl caviar spoons in place of muskets.

Serious dining has moved on to a different place - in most ways, a better and more egalitarian one. You can find greater ethnic variety. You can get distinctive food from a truck. You can search out the echt meatball hero, the Platonian pork bun, the taco to end all tacos.

But something has indeed been lost, a grace, pace and grandiosity that you still sometimes fantasize about and maybe on occasion pine for. Le Bec-Fin and Perrier epitomized it.

He stops by our table. He's exhausted but on cloud nine.

And he wants to make this much clear: "I'm not done yet. I'm only 69."

He mentions a new project, tailored to today's fashions.

"A bistro," he says. □